

ARKANSAS PYS 2020-2023

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## I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

This is a combined plan

#### COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)

Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)

Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)

## II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

### A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

#### 1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The State of Arkansas is in many ways a reflection of the changes facing the nation as a whole. Despite a population size of only one percent of the nation, seven of the Fortune 500 companies are headquartered here. This list includes the largest retailer in the world (Walmart), one of the largest food producers in the world (Tyson), and a national chain of gas stations (Murphy USA). The other four companies making that list, Murphy Oil, Dillard's, Windstream, and J.B. Hunt, further demonstrate the diverse economic base of the state. Arkansas is also fortunate to be home to major operations with companies headquartered in other states such as Baxter International, Lockheed Martin, Hewlett-Packard, FedEx, Post Foods, Kimberly-Clark, and Nucor to name a few. Arkansas has been fortunate to host the creation of unique information and service provider companies, such as Acxiom, Southwest Power Pool, and the aforementioned Windstream. The Arkansas workforce is cosmopolitan, with workers from all corners of the globe that come for the opportunities available in the Natural State.

Arkansas has many natural wonders and is a popular tourist destination. However, its greatest strength is in its human capital. Arkansas continues to be a leader in the extraction of energy and minerals, timber production, and agriculture. These industries also lead to a large number of jobs in the areas of support for these industries as well as in production of value-added products such as Tyson and Murphy USA. However, as reflected in the national trend, the Arkansas economy will generate most of its revenue through service industries. Much of Arkansas is rural, and the majority of service industries are located in metropolitan areas. This creates even greater challenges for economic development in the state's rural areas. Despite the challenges, rural areas of the state continue to be home to numerous contract manufacturers as well as manufacturers of unique products.

The Arkansas Economic Commission has identified 15 targeted industries for the state: Advanced Food Manufacturing and Packaging; Aerospace/Aviation; Biosciences; Data Centers; Distribution and Logistics Services; Firearms and Ammunition; Paper and Timber Products;

Regional Headquarters; Smart Grid Technologies (Power Electronics); Software Development and Data Management Services; Steel Production; Sustainable Building Products and Fixtures; Technical Support Services; Transportation Equipment Manufacturing; and Walmart Suppliers. <http://www.arkansasedc.com/industries>

These targeted industries represent the diversity of Arkansas enterprises, a product of the natural resources, labor force, and entrepreneurial spirit available in the state.

To prepare this report and provide workforce boards in the state with tools for development planning in their own areas, data were downloaded and prepared from the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Labor Market Information (LMI) website, <http://www.discover.arkansas.gov>. These data were then turned into interactive visualizations, which are available at the following websites. These visualizations can be downloaded as an image or in PDF format. The goal is to help stakeholders at the state and local level better understand future industry and occupational needs and to provide workforce development boards with the tools needed to better serve their areas.

While Arkansas's current and future industry outlook is similar to the nation, there are important areas of distinction.

### **Jobs By Industry 2014**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Arkansas</b>	<b>US</b>
Health care and social assistance	15.57	14.59
Manufacturing	14.12	9.34
Retail trade	12.47	11.77
Educational services: state, local and private	9.97	10.43
Accommodation and food services	8.91	9.66
Administrative and support and waste mgt.	5.58	6.57
Transportation and warehousing	4.89	3.56
Wholesale trade	4.27	4.46
Construction	4.22	4.70
Other services (except public administration)	4.10	4.90
Professional, scientific, and technical services	3.72	6.40
Finance and insurance	3.33	4.55
Management of companies and enterprises	2.96	1.66
Information	1.25	2.10
Real estate and rental and leasing	1.19	1.57
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1.18	1.06
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	0.96	1.61
Utilities	0.72	0.42

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Arkansas</b>	<b>US</b>
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0.62	0.65

Manufacturing employs a greater percentage of Arkansas workers, 14.12 percent, than at the national level of 9.34 percent. Health Care and Social Assistance is also larger at 15.57 percent in the state compared to 14.59 percent of the nation, in part because of high poverty and obesity rates in the state. Arkansas lags the nation in the number employed in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, 3.72 percent to 6.40 percent, but leads the nation in Management of Companies and Enterprises, 2.96 percent to 1.66 percent. These two areas are of special interest in Arkansas because they provide some of the highest wages in the state. Arkansas also leads in the percentage of workers in Transportation and Warehousing, 4.89 percent to 3.56 percent. J.B. Hunt, the fifth leading commercial carrier in the nation, recently announced an expansion that will create over 1,000 jobs in the next few years. Despite the large role Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting play in the state, there are actually a similar percentage of Arkansas workers in those industries compared to the national level. While manufacturing and transportation play a large role in the state's economy and employ a large number of its workers, these industries are also subject to increased efficiency which can lead to fewer jobs.

While Arkansas's current workforce is somewhat similar to the nation's, there are dramatic differences between regions of the state. For example, Manufacturing industries employ a dramatically different percentage of workers across the nation, state and regions.

#### **MANUFACTURING 2014**

<b>Local Workforce Area</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Southwest	25.43
Southeast	23.06
Northeast	21.29
Western	21.29
Northwest	16.19
West Central	15.68
State of Arkansas	14.12
North Central	12.37
Eastern	9.56
U.S.	9.34
Central	8.26
Little Rock	4.74

Within the regions, manufacturing employment as a percentage of total employment varies greatly, ranging from 4.74 to 25.43 percent. A significant percentage of workers in the Southwest area are in manufacturing. In fact, six of the regions (also Southeast, Northeast, Western, Northwest and West Central) employ a higher percent than the state. North Central and Eastern fall between the state and nation, while only Central and Little Rock have a smaller percentage of manufacturing employees than the United States. This employment swing

demonstrates that each region of the state has something of a unique makeup of industries in its area, with its own challenges for meeting the needs of employers in that region.

Looking at industry projections for Arkansas and its local workforce development areas, these differences become even more readily apparent. The bubble chart below shows each of Arkansas's local workforce development areas. The size of the bubble represents the number of jobs expected to be added to those local areas by 2024. The vertical axis represents the total number of jobs in those local areas, and the horizontal axis represents the percent of growth by local area.

#### **Total Job Growth Region**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Jobs 2024</b>	<b>Nchg</b>	<b>Percent 2014</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
West Central	110,815	8,952	100	8.8
Northeast	108,452	15,414	100	16.6
Western	108,539	9,378	100	9.5
North Central	72,189	7,986	100	12.4
Southeast	63,315	1,742	100	2.8
Eastern	35,235	1,441	100	4.3
Central	161,082	18,330	100	12.8
Little Rock	166,210	15,039	100	9.9
Northwest	237,838	27,982	100	13.3
Southwest	77,891	3,577	100	4.8

The Northwest local area is projected to continue to employ the largest number of Arkansans, over 237,000, and to have robust growth of 13.3 percent. However, the Northeast local area is projected to grow at a higher rate of 16.6 percent but will employ only about 108,000 workers. The Central (12.84 percent) and North Central (12.44 percent) local areas are also projected to have job growth at rates higher than the state average of 10.25 percent, while all other local areas will have below average growth. The Southeast local area is projected to have only 2.83 percent growth in jobs. The largest city in the Southeast, Pine Bluff, declined in population by 6.6 percent between 2000 and 2010 and declined another 4.43 percent between 2010 and 2013, earning it the title of one of the "Fastest Shrinking Cities" in the nation.

A look at a specific industry sector such as manufacturing also demonstrates the different needs of employers in those local areas.

#### **Manufacturing Job Growth Region**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Jobs 2024</b>	<b>Nchg</b>	<b>Percent 2014</b>	<b>Percent Growth</b>
Little Rock	7,401	233	5	3.3
Central	11,910	120	8	1.0
Eastern	3,405	173	10	5.4
North Central	8,416	477	12	6.0

Area	Jobs 2024	Nchg	Percent 2014	Percent Growth
West Central	16,308	332	16	2.1
Northwest	35,463	1,485	16	4.4
Western	21,288	176	21	0.8
Northeast	22,431	2,627	21	13.3
Southeast	13,397	-803	23	-5.7
Southwest	18,667	-231	25	-1.2

While the Northwest is projected to continue to have the most workers employed in manufacturing, over 35,000, the projected growth of 4.3 percent and addition of 1,485 manufacturing jobs is less than the 13.3 percent growth and addition of 2,627 jobs in the Northeast local area. The Southeast is projected to lose 803 jobs in that sector by 2024, a decline rate of 5.7 percent.

Manufacturing in Arkansas is very diverse, with the production of guided missiles, specialty petroleum products, railcars, heavy equipment, medical supplies, recreational boats, turbine blades, steel pipe, commercial trucks, tires, etc. This is in addition to the manufacturing of food products which is in virtually every region of the state, but also varies from the production of chips and cereal products in the Northeast, poultry products in the Northwest, and beef and pork processing in the West Central local area. What manufacturers in the state need in terms of a skilled workforce varies greatly by region, and the same is true for all other industry sectors. It is important that workforce development in the state be regionally focused and centered on the industry needs in those local areas.

The industries which will have the greatest rate of growth vary some between the national and state levels.

#### **Industry Growth 2024**

Area	Industry Sector	Percentage Growth
Arkansas	Accommodation and food services	18.895
Arkansas	Administrative and support and waste mgt.	11.64
Arkansas	Construction	11.847
Arkansas	Health care and social assistance	17.99
Arkansas	Professional, scientific, and technical services	13.059
Arkansas	Real estate and rental and leasing	11.352
Arkansas	Wholesale trade	10.505
US	Construction	12.9
US	Health care and social assistance	19.8
US	Professional, scientific, and technical services	12.5

In this example of the industry sectors in Arkansas which are projected to have a rate of growth of 10 percent or higher, what is most striking is that Accommodation and Food Services is not a top area of growth for the nation, even though it is projected to grow 18.9 percent at the state level. Arkansas's second highest area of growth at 17.9 percent will be in Health Care and Social Assistance, and this is similar to the 19.8 percent growth at the national level.

The industries which will have the lowest rates of growth won't very much.

### **Industry Least Growth 2024**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Industry Sector</b>	<b>Percentage Growth</b>
Arkansas	Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	2.34
Arkansas	Information	-2.93
Arkansas	Manufacturing	2.98
Arkansas	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2.92
Arkansas	Utilities	1.42
U.S.	Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	-5.5
U.S.	Information	-1
U.S.	Manufacturing	-6.7
U.S.	Transportation and warehousing	2.9
U.S.	Utilities	-8.7

The above graph shows industries where projected growth by 2024 is less than 3 percent, which will be five industries in Arkansas and at the national level. While manufacturing is projected to have a modest growth of 2.98 percent in the state, at the national level manufacturing is projected to lose jobs with a rate of -6.7 percent.

### **Population**

This section analyzes the demographics of Arkansas during 2010-30. Specifically, the study focuses on age and race populations at the state level, and urban-rural populations at the metropolitan, micropolitan and non-metropolitan level. Estimates (2010-18) are based on available data from the US Census Bureau and projections (2019-30) from the Institute for Economic Advancement at UALR and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Online Database.

#### **Age Distribution**

An analysis of Arkansas' population distribution by gender and age group for 2010, 2018 and 2030 revealed that between 2010-18 the number of people 65+ grew substantially while the younger population (under-20) reduced. In fact, the 65+ group increased its share of the total population from 14.4% in 2010 to 17.0% in 2018, a growth of about 90,000 people. During the same period, the under 20 age group went down from 27.3% to 26.0%, a net decrease of about 14,000. Based on the population projections, by 2030, 26.7% of the state population will be under age 20 while 20.3% will be age 65 or older resulting in the older population continuing to increase its share of the total population.

#### **Racial and Ethnic Composition**



This subsection describes the projected racial and ethnic composition of the state population from 2013-2060. Four major ethno-racial groups are identified: whites, blacks, Hispanics, and other races. Hispanics are not a racial group but rather an ethnic group, which means that whites, blacks and other races are found in this group. In this study, the whites, blacks and other races groups exclude Hispanics. The ethno-racial composition of the total population (all ages) and the younger population (under age 20) are examined.

Whites constitute the current and projected predominant population group in Arkansas. The under 20 age group is more diverse than the total population with whites constituting 63.7% of the under 20 population in 2018 as compared to 72.2% of the total population (all ages).

The white population group is expected to experience a decrease in its share of the total population from 72.2% in 2018 to a projected 68.1% in 2030, a decrease of about 4.1 percentage points. The trend is also expected for the under age 20 population, with the share of the white group decreasing from 63.7% in 2018 to a projected 59.0% in 2030, a decrease of 4.7 percentage points.

The remaining three groups (blacks, Hispanics, and other races), all are expected to show an increase in their share of total population. However, the Hispanics are anticipated to experience the largest percentage growth going from 7.7% in 2018 to 10.1% in 2030. This is also true for the under age 20 population with the Hispanic group growing from 11.6% in 2018 to 14.5% in 2030.

## **Urban-Rural**

There are two different definitions that categorize urban and rural areas in the country, one developed by the US Census Bureau and the other by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The US Census Bureau defines urban and rural areas based strictly on population size and density and they do not necessarily follow municipal boundaries. The OMB follows a regional-economic concept to define counties or county-equivalent units as metropolitan, micropolitan or neither. A metropolitan area (MSA) consists of one or more counties with a core urban population of 50,000+ and a micropolitan area has a core urban population of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000. Metropolitan areas are categorized as urban while counties that are not part of a metropolitan area are considered rural.

This subsection follows the OMB definition of urban and rural to classify the state counties into three major groups: metropolitan, micropolitan, and other rural. The majority of the state population is urban. In 2010, about 60% of all Arkansans lived in metropolitan areas while about 40% lived in rural areas (micropolitan and other rural). Population estimates from 2010-18 show that metropolitan areas are growing steadily but modestly. On the other hand, the populations of the micropolitan and other rural areas keep shrinking. In 2018, the share of all Arkansans living in urban areas grew to 62.5% while population in rural areas (micropolitan and other rural) decreased to 37.5%.

## **Metropolitan Areas**

Out of eight metropolitan areas, Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, Fort Smith, and Jonesboro are the most populated. In 2010, these four areas alone hosted close to half (49.6%) of the state population and in 2018, their share passed the halfway mark with 52.8% of all Arkansans living in these metropolitan areas.

In 2018, 21.1% of the state population lived in Pulaski, Faulkner and Saline counties in the LR-NLR-Conway metropolitan area. In the same year, within the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers area, Benton and Washington counties were the most populated sharing 16.9% of the total

population. Between 2010 and 2018, most of the gains in the state urban population came from population growth in Benton and Washington. During this period, these two counties alone increased their share of total population by 2.3 percentage points.

In general terms, the population in a geographic region can vary over time due to changes in several factors: number of births, deaths, and migration. For instance, in 2011, 52.6% of the population change (from the previous year) in the LR-NLR-Conway MSA was due to migration into the area. Out of this, domestic migration accounted for 40.3% while international migration contributed 12.3%. On the other hand, in 2016, 18.9% of the population change was due to domestic migration out of the region (hence a negative percentage) while 32.7% was due to international migration into the area.

The overall migration patterns for these two metro areas are different. During this period, the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers area experienced consistently positive international and domestic migration accounting jointly for about 60% or more of their annual population change. On the other hand, domestic migration in the LR-NLR-Conway area has been decreasing over the years and at times has even been negative. Since 2014, annual international migration in this area has accounted for a larger share of population change compared to their domestic counterpart.

## **Industry**

This section describes projected labor demand trends by industry sector for the state and Local Workforce Development Areas (WDA) for the decade of 2016-26. The analysis is based on the long-term (2016-26) State and Local WDA industry projections published by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and the national long-term industry projections published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The industries analyzed include all the 2-digit industry sectors defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), except for two – the self-employed and government sectors.

According to our data, labor demand in the state is expected to increase by 123,795 jobs between 2016-26. This increase will mainly come from growth in the top five industry sectors: Health care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Educational Services, and Accommodation and Food Services, which jointly are anticipated to add 79,686 jobs.

There are differences in the state and national job distribution patterns. The sectors in Arkansas that employ significantly more people compared to their counterparts in the nation are: (1) Manufacturing, (2) Transportation and Warehousing, (3) Management of Companies and Enterprises, and (4) Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting. On the other hand, the industry sectors that employ significantly less people than at the national level are: (1) Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, (2) Finance and Insurance, (3) Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services, and (4) Information.

To facilitate the analysis, the industry sectors at the state level are divided into three groups based on the number of jobs: Large (employing 100,000 or more), Medium (employing between 35,000-100,000) and Small (employing less than 35,000).

Even though the percentage distribution of jobs among the industry sectors in the state are different from the nation, the job distribution numbers among the three groups mentioned above are about the same. For instance, the large group (comprising the top five industry sectors) accounts for 60.3% of all jobs in Arkansas and 56% of all jobs in the country. The medium group (next eight industry sectors) accounts for 33.4 % of jobs in Arkansas and about

36.8% of jobs in the country and finally, the small group (consisting of the bottom six sectors) accounts for 6.4% of the state jobs and 7.4% of the nation's jobs.

All industry sectors are expected to show growth except for two – Information and Mining. For the large industry sectors, Health Care and Social Assistance is projected to show the fastest growth (20.7% increase and 37,651 additional jobs). Similarly, for the medium-sized industry sectors, Management of Companies and Enterprises is expected to grow the fastest (22.9% and 8,029 jobs) and likewise, among the small-sized sectors Real Estate and Rental and Leasing are expected to grow by 10.5% and 1,400 jobs.

### **Industry Sectors at the Local WDA Level**

Arkansas is divided into ten local Workforce Development Areas. We analyzed these ten areas along with their projected percent and numeric change in total employment for all sectors between 2016-2026. The Northwest WDA is expected to grow at the fastest rate (14.2%) and also add the most number of jobs (37,546). The North Central WDA is next with a growth rate of 13.8% adding 9,158 jobs. The other WDAs that are expected to experience more than 10% growth were Central WDA, West Central WDA, and Northwest WDA. As expected, those WDAs located in the Mississippi Delta Region, the Eastern WDA and Southeast WDA experience the least percentage growth.

The majority of the jobs across all industry sectors are located in three local Workforce Development Areas – Northwest, Little Rock and Central. The three areas together account for about 51.2 % of all WDA jobs with the Northwest taking the largest share. Apart from jobs in Health Care and Social Assistance, the majority of the jobs in the large industry sectors are located in the Northwest. The Little Rock Area accounts for the largest number of jobs in Health Care and Social Assistance. Among the medium-sized industry sectors, most of the jobs in Transportation and Warehousing and Management of Companies and Enterprises are located in the Northwest.

We determined the estimated projected percentage change in the number of jobs for each of the industry sectors at the WDA level between 2016 and 2026. In the large industry sectors, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector is expected to grow significantly across all local WDAs, while Manufacturing shows modest growth or decline in all areas except for North Central and Northeast where it shows a relatively strong growth. Among the medium-sized sectors, Management of Companies and Enterprises is expected to experience the fastest growth among all industry sectors across all WDAs with the exception of West Central. Among the small-sized industrial sectors, Information shows an across the board decline with the exception of the Central WDA, which shows a significant growth. The Mining sector also shows a modest growth or decline in all WDAs except for the Northeast.

### **Labor Force and Unemployment Rate**

This section describes the State labor force and unemployment rate estimates for the period between January 2008 – September 2019 published by the Division of Workforce Services. We have included Table 8 from this report below. Stated simply, the labor force includes all civilians 16 years and older who are employed or unemployed.

Table 8: Arkansas Employment Status, 2017				
	Total	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment / Population Ratio	Unemployment rate
Population 16 years and over	2,351,061	58.1%	54.3%	6.3%
<b>AGE</b>				
16 to 19 years	159,890	35.6%	28.2%	20.7%
20 to 24 years	205,401	72.5%	63.7%	11.5%
25 to 29 years	196,865	78.3%	72.0%	7.3%
30 to 34 years	190,888	78.7%	73.1%	6.7%
35 to 44 years	367,460	78.3%	74.0%	5.2%
45 to 54 years	381,092	74.1%	71.0%	4.1%
55 to 59 years	193,913	64.7%	62.5%	3.5%
60 to 64 years	179,385	48.2%	46.9%	2.8%
65 to 74 years	277,145	22.1%	21.4%	3.0%
75 years and over	199,022	6.3%	6.1%	3.2%
<b>RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN</b>				
White alone	1,859,731	57.8%	54.6%	5.3%
Black or African American alone	346,651	57.3%	50.5%	11.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	15,335	52.0%	47.4%	8.4%
Asian alone	33,582	65.8%	62.7%	4.5%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	4,518	61.1%	57.1%	6.5%
Some other race alone	49,008	70.4%	66.8%	5.1%
Two or more races	42,236	58.5%	53.2%	8.4%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	137,412	68.7%	64.9%	5.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	1,776,600	57.3%	54.1%	5.3%
Population 20 to 64 years	1,715,004	72.0%	67.6%	5.8%
<b>SEX</b>				
Male	848,276	77.0%	71.9%	6.0%
Female	866,728	67.2%	63.4%	5.5%
With own children under 18 years	316,317	71.5%	67.2%	5.9%
With own children under 6 years only	73,221	67.7%	61.7%	8.7%
With own children under 6 years and 6 to 17 years	65,400	64.5%	60.4%	6.2%
With own children under 6 to 17 years only	177,696	75.7%	72.1%	4.7%
<b>POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS</b>				
Below poverty level	281,384	46.5%	36.1%	22.3%
At or above the poverty level	1,392,444	79.0%	75.7%	3.8%
<b>DISABILITY STATUS</b>				
With any disability	261,041	34.7%	30.5%	11.9%
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>				
Population 25 to 64 years	1,509,603	72.0%	68.2%	5.0%
Less than high school graduate	188,642	53.9%	48.8%	9.4%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	508,200	67.4%	63.2%	6.2%
Some college or associate's degree	463,632	74.9%	70.8%	4.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher	349,129	84.6%	82.4%	2.2%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates				

Arkansas Employment Status 2017 Table 8

Table 8 (above) takes a detailed look at the labor force data for the year 2017 calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau (based on the 2013-2017 American Community Survey). The table includes labor force participation rates, employment-to-population ratios and unemployment rates for various demographics. The highest unemployment rates are found among the younger population, Blacks or African Americans, persons with disabilities, and those with less than a high school diploma.

We reviewed our historical data (January 2008 – September 2019) for the State labor force and the number of employed. As a consequence of the Great Recession of 2008, both the labor force and the number of unemployed decreased from 2008 till 2010. They made a modest recovery from 2010-2012 and then shows a sharp decline again until 2014. From that point onward the labor force and number of unemployed have experience a steady increase. However, since 2014 the number of employed has increased at a faster rate than the labor force. In fact, the number

of employed in September 2019 has surpassed the pre-recession level while the labor force is just approaching its pre-recession level. As a result, the unemployment rate has been steadily decreasing from its highest in May 2011 (8.5%) to its lowest at 3.4% in August 2019.

### **Nonfarm Industry Employment Estimates**

Trends in the employment estimates from 2008-2018 for the Large, Medium, and Small nonfarm Industry Sectors are analyzed in this section. The Large, Medium, and Small Industry Sectors are defined in the above section on Industry Employment Projections. The Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting sector is excluded from this analysis while Utilities is incorporated into the Transportation and Warehousing sector.

Among the large sectors, Health Care and Social Assistance has been consistently increasing in the past decade while Manufacturing showed a sharp decline from 2008-2013 and since then shown a modest growth in employment. In terms of percentage change, Health Care and Social Assistance experienced the fastest growth at 20.7%.

In the medium-sized sectors, all industries showed a modest growth from 2010 onward with Administrative and Waste Services experiencing the greatest numeric change with 14,700 jobs added while Management of Companies and Enterprises experienced the greatest percentage change at 34.2%. Other notable changes were the numeric increases 8,900 jobs in both Finance and Insurance as well as Management of Companies and Enterprises. Finally, other notable percentage changes were Administrative and Waste Services at 27.9% and Finance and Insurance at 23.4%.

For the small-sized sectors, all industries show either a decline or a slight increase in employment. The Mining and Logging sector showed the largest percentage decline at 43.9% (a loss of 4,700 jobs) followed by Information at 35.6% (6,200 jobs lost).

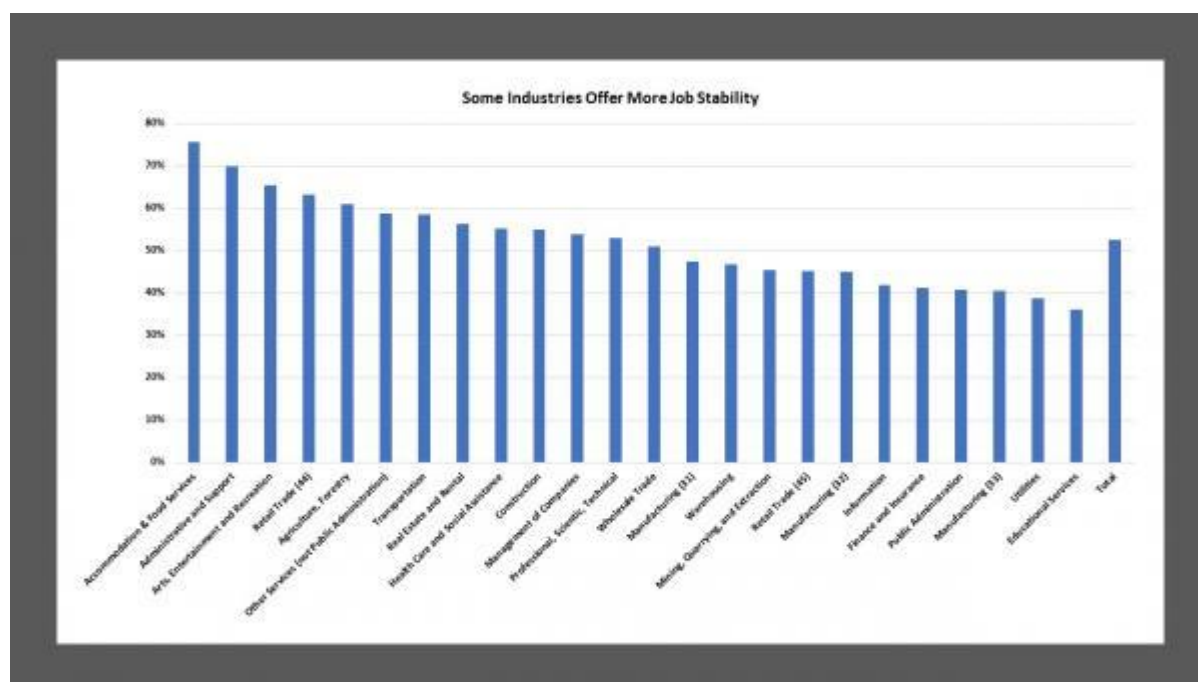
Based upon the NAICS Industry Titles, an analysis of the nonfarm employment estimates for all industry sectors between 2008 and 2018 showed an overall increase of 59,400 jobs (4.9%). Mining and Logging experience a decrease of 43.9%, followed by Information with a 35.6% decrease. No other category experienced a decrease of at least 30%. On a positive note, Management of Companies and Enterprise saw the largest increase of 34.2% followed closely by Social Assistance with an increase of 33.3% and Ambulatory Health Care Services with an increase of 29.6%. There was no other category with an increase of more than 25%.

### **Arkansas Department of Commerce Research Team Inputs**

Important stylized facts about labor markets involve patterns of turnover, job stability, and length of tenure. Many hires lead to jobs of short duration, lasting less than a year. Such transient hires tend to comprise a small share of the total stock of jobs at any given time, however. We analyzed the share of stable jobs existing at the end of 2018 that began in 2016 or later, by industry. Across all industries, about half of jobs had appeared, or the most recent hire into the job had taken place, three years prior or less. But the ratio varied greatly by industry, from 76% in accommodation and food services, to under 40% in utilities and education.

Long-term jobs tend to pay better. In most industries—utilities is an intriguing exception—the long-term workers earn substantially more than the recent hires. In most industries, long-term employees earn about 30-100% more than new hires. While obvious explanations for this include firm-specific on-the-job training and rewards for organizational loyalty, it could also reflect the skill and/or effort levels of transient versus permanent workers. Either way, it suggests the value of placing people in long-term, stable jobs. The Chart below shows the share of stable jobs existing at the end of 2018 that began in 2016 or later, by industry. Across all

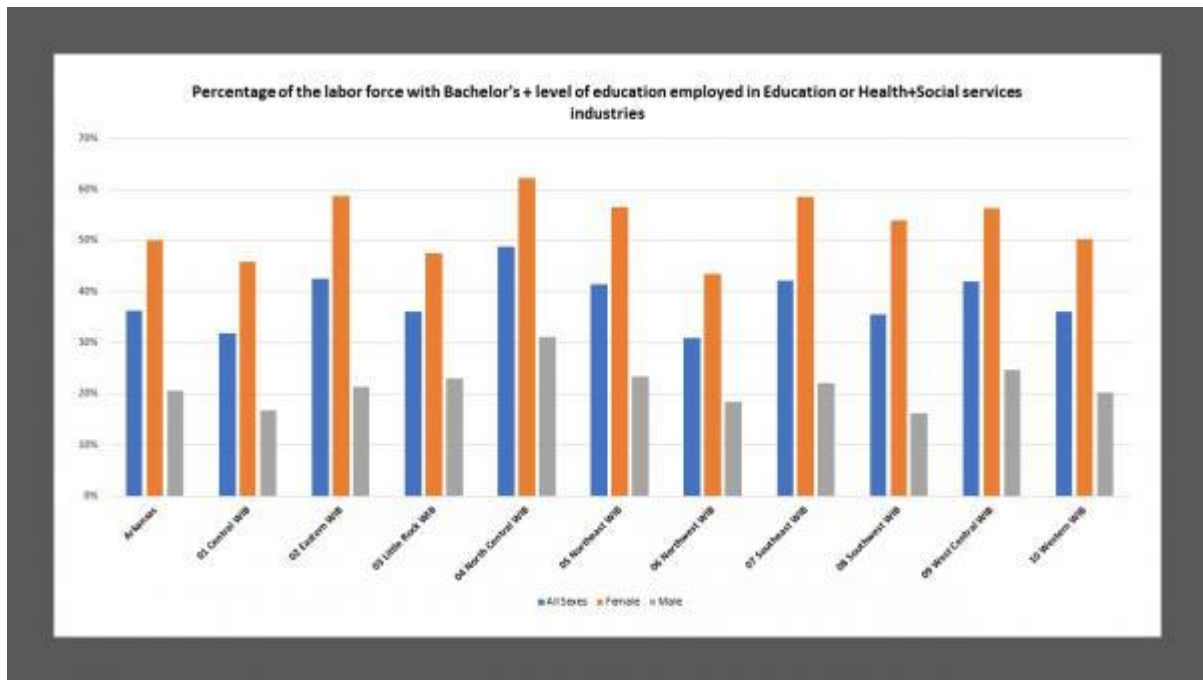
industries, about half of jobs had appeared, or the most recent hire into the job had taken place, three years prior or less. But the ratio varied greatly by industry, from 76% in accommodation and food services, to under 40% in utilities and education.



Some Industries Offer More Job Stability Chart

### Industries Employing College-Educated Workers, by Gender and Region

College-educated workers are found in all industries, but they are more concentrated in some industries relative to the workforce as a whole. These patterns of industry concentration vary somewhat by region as well. One striking pattern is that women with a Bachelor's degree or more tend to be concentrated in the health and education industries, especially outside metropolitan centers. The share of college-educated working women who are in health or education exceeded 60% in the North Central Workforce Area, and was nearly 60% in the Eastern and Southeast Workforce Areas. It was lowest in the Northwest Workforce Area, at just over 40%. The chart below displays the percentage of labor force with Bachelor's level of attainment of men and women, by local workforce area.

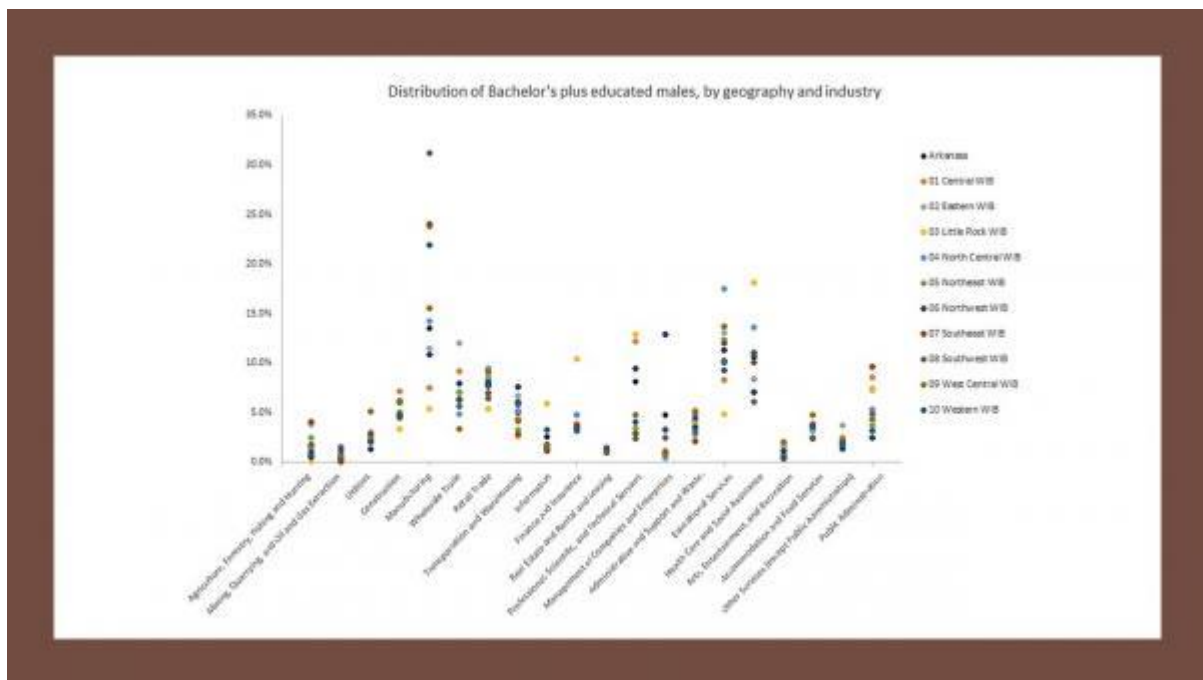


### Percentage of Labor Force with Bachelor's Degrees Employed in Education or Health/Social Services

The share of college-educated men working in health and education was everywhere much lower than the share of college-educated working women. It was highest in the North Central Workforce Area, at just over 30%, and under 20% in the Northwest, Southwest, and Central Workforce Areas.

If college-educated men don't work in health and education, where do they work? Our data shows that the answers vary a lot by region. Manufacturing, for example, employs 31% of college-educated working men in the Southwest Workforce Area, and 24% in the Northeast Workforce Area, but only 11% in the Northwest Workforce Area, 8% in the Central Workforce Area and 5% in the Little Rock Workforce Area. By contrast, professional, scientific and technical services employs 13% of college-educated working men in the Little Rock Workforce Area, 12% in the Central Workforce Area, and 10% in the Northwest Workforce Area, but under 5% in most Workforce Areas and under 3% in some.





## Distribution of Bachelor's Degreed Males, by Geography and Industry

### Looking for Growing Occupations with Good Wages

Occupational categories differ in prevailing pay rates and job growth. In recent years, there have been job losses for office and administrative support occupations in most regions of the state. Most regions have also seen a decline in legal occupations (except NW Arkansas) and in life, physical, and social science occupations. By contrast, there has been strong growth in food preparation and serving related occupations, though with considerable regional variation. However, food service is a poorly paid occupation, earning less than \$10/hour median wages throughout the state.

### Educational Awards by Level, Region, and Field of Study

In the chart below, we analyzed how many educational awards, altogether and at various levels, were awarded in each of the WDAs (Workforce Development Areas) of the state. Substantial interregional differences are visible. First, of course, regions with major Bachelor's degree granting institutions stand out for awarding more Bachelor's degrees per capita. Thus, Northwest WDA, home of UA-Fayetteville, awards 184 Bachelor's degrees per 10,000 people, and Northeast WDA, home of ASU-Jonesboro, awards 146, but Southeast only 68, Southwest only 42 and Eastern WDA none. Little Rock WDA (UALR) and Central WDA (UCA) are the other Bachelor's degree hubs. There seems to be a pattern whereby regions that award fewer Bachelor's degrees tend to award more certificates, which should make sense if all populations have some demand for postsecondary education and certificate programs and Bachelor's degree programs are substitutes.



AGGREGATE	01 Central WDA	02 Eastern WDA	03 Little Rock WDA	04 North Central WDA	05 Northeast WDA	06 Northwest WDA	07 Southeast WDA	08 Southwest WDA	09 West Central WDA	10 Western WDA
All Award Levels	216.6	176.8	372.6	418.9	432.8	380.8	188.5	343.5	346.9	123.0
Certificate < 1 Yr	18.1	90.1	0.7	85.6	38.3	23.3	32.9	86.1	60.8	24.5
Certificate 1+ but < 2 Yr	39.8	30.4	0.6	85.7	26.5	27.8	27.0	93.4	43.1	11.1
Associate's	45.0	56.3	43.1	112.0	73.8	55.8	49.7	72.2	65.1	26.2
Certificate 2+ but < 4 Yr	0.0	-	-	-	-	-	1.7	-	-	-
Bachelor's	83.9	-	184.6	94.0	146.0	184.0	68.3	42.0	146.9	61.2
Post-Baccalaureate	0.7	-	13.7	-	2.0	1.6	-	0.3	1.8	-
Master's	24.5	-	77.7	26.4	113.0	47.7	12.9	48.9	28.1	0.1
Post-Master's	1.5	-	0.4	-	28.5	0.4	-	-	0.8	-
Doctorate	3.1	-	51.7	8.3	4.4	19.2	0.1	-	0.3	-

### All Awards Per 10,000, By Local Area

The chart below also classifies awards by field of study (but not level) in order to shed light on regional differences in choice of field. The total numbers of awards differ because the data source, ARC's Economic Security Report, does not include private institutions. In some cases, the concentration of graduates from particular fields of study in particular regions fits with known distributions of economic activity across the state. The fact that business and management awards per capita is highest in Northwest WIB area makes sense in light of the concentration of corporate headquarters in that part of the state. Likewise, the concentration of health professions degrees in Little Rock WIB area reflects Little Rock's role as a hospital and health care hub with a large catchment area. It is less clear why education awards are concentrated in Northeast WIB area, or transportation awards in North Central WIB area.

Awards per 10,000 people	01 Central WDA	02 Eastern WDA	03 Little Rock WDA	04 North Central WDA	05 Northeast WDA	06 Northwest WDA	07 Southeast WDA	08 Southwest WDA	09 West Central WDA	10 Western WDA
ALL	138	118	322	178	331	347	137	198	263	98
Business, Management & Marketing	18	3	33	9	27	43	12	14	22	15
Communication & Journalism	2	8	5	8	7	11	1	1	4	1
Education	14	1	28	4	187	12	19	12	34	7
Engineering	9	8	4	8	3	18	8	8	4	9
Health Professions	25	21	122	51	88	38	26	46	53	16
Law Enforcement & Protective Serv.	8	1	11	3	9	3	8	28	9	4
Legal Professions & Studies	1	8	13	8	8	5	8	8	8	9
Liberal Arts & Sci., Gen. Studies	38	31	14	38	35	28	21	23	34	12
Mechanic & Repair Technologies	3	1	8	18	2	1	1	4	6	1
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	1	1	4	3	3	8	4	8	21	9
Parks, Recreation, Leisure & Fitness	1	8	8	8	5	18	2	3	4	9
Public Admin. & Social Service	8	1	15	8	18	2	1	2	2	9
Transportation & Materials Moving	8	8	8	11	8	1	8	8	1	8
All the others	42	56	81	37	52	91	58	82	88	33

## 2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

### STATE AGENCY PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITY

Agency	Core Program	Non-Core Program
ADWS	§ Adult (Title I) § Dislocated Worker (Title I) § Youth (Title I) § Wagner-Peyser (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III)	§ Trade Adjustment Assistance for Worker Program (Chapter 2, Title II Tract Act) § Jobs for Veterans State Grants (Title 38, Chapter 41) § Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program (Title I) § Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program (42 U.S.C.)
ADWS	§ Adult Education and Family Literacy (WIOA Title II) § Vocational Rehabilitation (Title I Rehabilitation, as amended by Title IV) as of July 1, 2016	
ADWS	§ Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (Title I Rehabilitation, as amended by Title IV) as of July 1, 2016	
ADHS	§ Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	§ SNAP Employment & Training

### ARKANSAS WORKFORCE CENTERS

The Arkansas Workforce Centers are at the forefront of the workforce activities and represent Arkansas's version of the American Jobs Center. There are 30 workforce centers spread across the state providing access to many Arkansans. In addition to these locations, Arkansas has six mobile workforce center units that travel the state and provide service locations in rural parts of the State.

The Arkansas Workforce Centers are overseen at the state level by the ADWS and are managed locally by each of the local workforce development boards. Local boards are comprised of local businesses, labor, partner agencies, and other key stakeholders to create a diverse and functional group. The boards, in alignment with the States' vision, provide front line strategic implementation for state-wide initiatives in addition to their locally-determined priorities. State initiatives include sector strategies, career pathway development, and delivery of standardized business services. Local priorities include layoff aversion, specific career pathway development, youth programs, targeted sector partnerships, work-based learning, and others.

Local boards are tasked with procuring a one-stop operator for the daily operation of their perspective center(s) in accordance with WIOA 121(d). These boards carry out workforce activities by partnering locally through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) to implement core, non-core, and other partner programs. Arkansas Workforce Centers are fully integrated with WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Unemployment Insurance (UI), Adult

Education and Family Literacy, Vocational Rehabilitation. Local partnerships and integration also exist in many areas with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training Programs and others.

With this foundation for service integration, Arkansas Workforce Centers operate under the “no wrong door” philosophy, while local areas have developed their own customer flow strategies that are unique to their areas. Typical customers entering the center are engaged by an intake process that is designed to identify the needs of the individual by gathering information and then utilizing the appropriate resources for those needs. In some cases, the resources are initiated by a referral to a partner program. Customers are given solutions and next steps to their questions, barriers, and issues by connecting directly with the appropriate workforce system partner as part of this philosophy.

The Adult Education Section funds 36 local adult education programs, including two community-based and/or privately operated literacy councils, and special projects such as the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center through state and federal grants. The service delivery systems are diverse. Programs are funded through a variety of local administrative entities, including public schools systems, community based organizations, colleges, community colleges, technical institutes, and the Arkansas Department of Corrections. Local programs provide adult education services such as teaching academic skills to people who function from beginning reading through NRS educational functioning ABE Level 6 level and all levels of English as a Second Language (ESL). These services are free and provided in classes held in locations throughout each program’s service area. Additional programs such as family literacy, Integrated and Education Training, and Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) are also offered in workplaces and correctional institutions. In the 2018-2019 program year, 22,980 adult Arkansans received services from programs receiving adult education funding; 4,611 or 20 percent were English Language Learners and 3,438 or 15 percent were individuals in institutional settings such as correctional facilities or community corrections programs.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) has field offices co-located at Arkansas Workforce Centers in Harrison and Searcy. ARS maintains counselor itinerary points at all other Workforce Centers.

DSB continues to support its 17 accessible kiosks for consumers at Arkansas Workforce Center locations. The original ten kiosks were placed in the same cities where DSB has offices; the second set of seven kiosks was placed in cities with either two- or four-year institutions of higher education. The kiosks provide consumers the same access to the Internet to search for jobs as a sighted person seeking services from workforce centers. DSB provides training to workforce center staff and clients on the use of the kiosks.

## **WORKFORCE SYSTEM SERVICES - UNEMPLOYED AND UNDEREMPLOYED**

Arkansas Workforce Centers offer the full array of career services outlined in WIOA 134(c)(2) for unemployed and underemployed jobseekers. Career services available at the centers vary because of local area inflexion and needs of particular communities. Basic career services are available at approximately 30 locations throughout Arkansas. Each center has computers, printers, copiers, printed resources, and staff to assist jobseekers. Many of the services, including Arkansas Job Link and Discover Arkansas LMI Portal, can be accessed virtually through the internet via computer, smart phone, or tablet. Arkansas Job Link is the state job matching system and the virtual one-stop-shop where Arkansans can centralize all their career search activities. It allows jobseekers to self-enter his/her resume(s) and job search 24/7. Arkansas Job Link also provides access to a toolbox of job search assistance links, including career

exploration, training resources, self-marketing tools, Unemployment Insurance information, and additional job banks. The built-in event calendar communicates upcoming hiring events, job fairs, and other workforce activities.

Discover Arkansas LMI Portal allows jobseekers to make informed data-driven career decisions. This labor market system provides a wide variety of regional labor market services, such as labor trends, statistics, economics, demographics, salaries, and employer data. It allows jobseekers to set up a personal page for their career exploration data to be readily accessible. Basic career services also extend beyond the virtual world. After the initial assessment, customers, as appropriate, may be provided with direct linkages to additional workforce activities, including multiple education and training opportunities across the workforce system through partner referrals.

Many of these partners are housed within the workforce center.

### **JOBSEEKER SERVICES**

Individualized career services within the Arkansas Workforce Centers vary across the state, but all the offices offer a full line of activities to prepare jobseekers for the modern workforce. They address many of the soft skills and technical skills training Arkansas employers require such as:

Labor exchange services must also provide labor market information to the individuals seeking services. The information must be accurate and include information on local, regional and national labor markets, such as:

- Job vacancies
- Skills necessary to obtain the jobs
- In-demand occupations and related earning potential
- Opportunities for advancement in those occupations

All One-Stops must provide the following career services:

- Outreach, intake and orientation
- Initial assessment
- Labor exchange services
- Eligibility determination
- Referrals to programs
- Performance and cost information
- Information on unemployment insurance
- Financial aid information
- Follow-up services

Additionally, One-Stops and partners must provide appropriate services for individuals to obtain or retain employment. These services include, but are not limited to:

- Individual Employment Plan (IEP)

- Career planning and counseling (no longer called case management)
- Comprehensive assessment
- Occupational Skills Assessment
- Short-term prevocational services
- Internship and work experience, including transitional jobs and industry partnerships
- Workforce preparation
- Out-of-area job search
- English language acquisition
- Financial literacy

## **TRAINING SERVICES**

Career services are not always enough to enable job seekers to obtain self-sufficient employment. In some instances, formal training is required. Arkansas Workforce Centers offer multiple training services such as:

- Occupational skills training
- On-the-job training (OJT)
- Registered Apprenticeships
- Incumbent worker training
- Skill upgrading and retaining
- Entrepreneurial training, and
- Adult education and family literacy activities

Training services are funded through WIOA programs, Pell Grants, partner programs, and state and local grants. Local areas are responsible for establishing and implementing local policies for eligibility, Individual Training Account (ITA) limits, and the identification of in-demand sectors or occupations. Through multiple initiatives and projects, Arkansas has focused training and career development activities on sector strategies/partnerships and career pathway development. At the state level, the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) has been updated pursuant to WIOA Sections 122 and 134. This list ensures that Arkansans are able to make informed decisions on training providers and programs based on accurate data including completion and placement rates; labor market information; and wage expectations.

## **SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

In order to assist jobseekers in obtaining or retaining employment through career or training services, Arkansas Workforce Centers offer a variety of supportive services. Local areas are responsible for establishing a supportive service policy that outlines types, eligibility, limits, etc. Examples of supportive services include child care; transportation; needs-related payments; tools and equipment; uniforms; and other clothing. In addition to WIOA-funded supportive services, local areas have developed relationships with community partners that assist with utility payments, food, shelter, and other basic needs.

## BUSINESS SERVICES

The focal point of all workforce system activities is business and industry. These activities are taking place statewide and may include:

- **Access to facilities** - Use of Workforce Center facilities by a business for a variety of purposes such as meetings, trainings, orientations, interviews, etc.;
- **Assessments** - Any test or assortment of tests used to measure the skills, interests and/or personality traits of a jobseeker, potential employee, or current employee;
- **Business education** - Seminars, round tables, workshops, focus groups, etc.;
- **Business information** - Information given to a business pertaining to a variety of incentive programs or other information requested that provides a benefit to that business;
- **Hiring events** - A customized event for a single employer that assists with recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of one or more positions;
- **Job fairs** - Event for multiple employers that assists with the recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of one or more positions;
- **Job postings** - Staff-entered or web-entered job orders approved by staff;
- **Labor market information** - Information on state and local labor market conditions; industries, occupations, and characteristics of the workforce; area business identified skills needs; employer wage and benefit trends; short and long-term industry and occupational projections; worker supply and demand; and job vacancies survey results;
- **Rapid Response** - A variety of services to businesses that are facing restructuring and downsizing including onsite workshops for employees in transition; job placement assistance; and information on unemployment benefits;
- **Screening** - Any service that involves the initial evaluation of applications or resumes that assists the employer in the recruiting process;
- **Training and retraining** - Any service provided to a business that involves the training or retraining of current or future employees including OJTs, Work Experiences, Incumbent Worker Training, etc.

The individual program services offered are detailed and provide program specific information in Section VI and VII.

## SERVICES TO DISABLED PERSONS

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is the general vocational rehabilitation agency in Arkansas. It has the responsibility of providing targeted services to eligible Arkansans with disabilities that assist clients in obtaining or maintaining competitive integrated employment. Currently there remain significant barriers to working age Arkansans with disabilities in participating in the state's workforce. This is evidenced by the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium: 2018, indicating only 30.8% of individuals age 18 to 64 with disabilities are employed. This places the state in the lower 10% nationally.

Through the Governor's Executive Order 10-17, DSB coordinates with other state agencies to increase employment of Arkansans with disabilities. The order also aims to focus consumer services first toward the goal of self-sufficiency through employment.

[1] Reference: Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics (StatsRRTC), (2008); Report on Disability Demographics for Arkansas; Retrieved 12/21/2015, URL: <https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/reports/report.cfm?fips=2005000emp-state>.

## **B. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities**

*Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A) above.*

### **STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

Initial analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Arkansas's workforce development activities suggests that our talent development system has the right expertise and pockets of excellence.

Successfully serving common customers in our system will require continued collaboration, coordination and re-assessment. During a strategic planning session of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges were identified for the workforce development system in Arkansas.

#### **STRENGTHS**

- The State has strong workforce development programs in place; however, the state needs to focus on outreach and education about the services available.
- The State's business leaders are at the table as champions of the programs through input into program design, identification of skills development, and commitment to continuous improvement of the talent development system.
- Key industries are involved in strategic planning and committed to driving the talent development system in Arkansas.
- Economic development is involved in planning activities at the state and local level and has identified targeted industries.
- Partnerships at state level are strong and will enable the state to successfully and fully implement WIOA, thereby enhancing services to the public through the State's talent development system.
- Despite stagnant budgets, staffing has been maintained to provide services in all 75 counties.

#### **WEAKNESSES**

- Arkansas has a shrinking labor force.
- Secondary education's involvement in workforce development, strategic planning and program design needs to be strengthened.
- Funding for community colleges is insufficient.

- While there are strong partnerships in some areas of the state with community colleges and workforce development, involvement from all community colleges statewide should be stronger.
- Funding models for education are inadequate.
- Marketing and outreach of the State's talent development system is inadequate and too many employers and jobseekers are unaware of the services and opportunities available.
- Employers' outreach to students and their parents regarding potential occupations needs to be increased.
- Parent and students lack knowledge of business/industry in the State.
- Government is not at the table as an employer.
- Kiosks for consumers who are blind are not available statewide and staff turnover at the locations make it necessary to provide frequent and ongoing training.
- Staff training programs for serving the customers across agencies are not in place, especially recognizing the special needs of serving persons with disabilities.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Current Registered Apprenticeship presents tremendous opportunities for opening workforce development strategies.
- Strong industry/workforce partnerships exist in some areas of the State.
- The State has new leadership to drive the new current agenda of collaboration and coordination.
- Bringing community colleges to the table to enhance the State's talent development system.
- Opportunities for community college programs to increase capacity.
- Program-based learning needs to be explored and utilized.
- Community College partnerships should be expanded to increase credential attainment.

## **CHALLENGES**

- Arkansas has an aging workforce and the younger generation is not skilled to replace retiring workers.
- Regional disparities in workforce and industries make it difficult to recruit new industries.
- Misalignment of services and programs could threaten enhanced service delivery and integrity of the talent development system.
- Duplication of efforts and programs reduces the efficiency of already stagnant or declining budgets.
- Systemic education issues exist in secondary and higher education.



- Industries may be lost due to a lack of skilled labor.
- There is a lack of existing workforce training funds.
- Budgets for workforce development programs are stagnant or declining due to a lack of funding from federal sources.
- Coordination at the state level for implementation of WIOA is strong; however, this level of collaboration and coordination is labor intensive and often takes team members away from oversight and leadership responsibilities. Maintaining the current level of collaboration is critical to success.

### **C. State Workforce Development Capacity**

*Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A) above.*

Arkansas is well-poised to provide workforce and talent development activities given the strong knowledge base of its practitioners. Due to nationally-recognized system components, such as a career pathway system with many bridges and stackable credentials; a robust Registered Apprenticeship program; and training programs that meet industry demands, our pursuit becomes one of continuous improvement. Arkansas has implemented a workforce system designed to increase capacity to serve more customers. Led by the strategic vision set by Governor Asa Hutchinson and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, the functional design of the Arkansas workforce system starts with coordination at the highest level through the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, which provides a common direction at the state agency level for driving workforce development. This partnership at the highest level will increase capacity and extend the alignment of the system to a broader and more diverse population of jobseekers across the state.

The agencies represented in this plan, some who are new to being co-located in a workforce center, will develop a streamlined customer experience through referrals from and to core, non-core, and program partners to coordinate workforce activities and increase the capacity of each partner by allowing specialized services to function optimally and assist in the elimination of the duplication of services. Furthermore, through direction by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board and one of the objectives of this plan, the State will explore ways to increase capacity, especially in rural areas across the state beyond bricks-and-mortar, through virtual services.

Concern continues for many of the programs of this plan, including the WIOA Title I programs, Wagner-Peyser, TANF, and Adult Education that have experienced stagnant or declining funding over the last several years. The lack of new funding in many programs means the State must continue to find more efficient ways to provide services to Arkansans.

Although funding has been stagnant over the past 20 years in Adult Education, providers still serve all 75 counties in Arkansas. Adult education currently receives \$19 million in state funding and \$5.2 million in federal funding to serve approximately 28,000 clients. The funding continues to be used for Adult Education and Family Literacy activities, such as adult basic education, literacy, workplace education, family literacy activities, English language acquisition activities, integrated English literacy and civics education, workforce preparation, correctional education, and integrated education and training.

The Adult Education Section has a strong working collaborative relationship with other state agencies and organizations to help provide education, literacy, and workforce services to clients

that help reduce duplication of services and provide braided funding opportunities of approved activities. Some of the current collaborations include:

- The Arkansas Literacy Council to increase the number of literacy councils throughout the state
- The Division of Workforce Services and the Department of Human Services to provide educational support and training to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) clients
- The Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to provide assistance for adult education students with a documented disability(ies)
- Local courts and community corrections programs to provide academic instruction to first time offenders and reentry individuals
- Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC) to provide career pathways that lead to a sustainable income to students without a high school diploma
- The Arkansas Department of Corrections to continue to provide federal funding to incarcerated adults without a high school diploma

In addition, besides the traditional classroom, one of the ways adult education is providing services is through distance education. In 2018-2019, 83 percent of programs provided distance learning instruction. Currently, all adult education and literacy providers, with the exception of Arkansas Correctional School, has trained staff to offer distance learning. The state office has restructured the distance learning program to provide professional development training and certified curricula that can assist with student learning. For students who are unable to attend an adult education or literacy council program or desire to work independently, distance learning has been a great alternative for education access.

The capacity to provide needed workforce development services to individuals with disabilities is difficult to predict. The WIOA mandate to spend 15 percent of client service dollars on pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities has required the state's vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies to take a hard look at how best to utilize existing resources to address overall client needs. It is essential VR agencies look for partnership opportunities at both the state and local levels to find alternative ways of providing services that allow individuals with disabilities to enter into and remain in competitive integrated employment.

The State has a strong partnership between the workforce development system and Registered Apprenticeship (RA). This partnership has been strengthened through a series of USDOL RA focused discretionary grants awarded to the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services through the ApprenticeshipUSA Initiative. The awarded grants through the ApprenticeshipUSA Initiative include: the Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathways Initiative (AAPI), Arkansas Expands Apprenticeship (AREA), and the State Accelerator Planning grant. These grants promote the expansion of both the number of registered apprentices across the State as well as the number of occupational-based RA programs to meet employer-driven workforce needs in both traditional and non-traditional RA industries. Additionally, these grants promote an increased diversity in the population being served across RA programs. These grants are geared towards creating and expanding RA programs in targeted growth industries, strengthen employer and service provider partnerships, as well as provide an opportunity for participants to learn occupational specific skills as well as good wages while gaining college credit. Through partnerships with the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, Community Colleges, ADWS and Local

Workforce Development Area Business Services Outreach Staff, the USDOL State Office of Apprenticeship, and the Office of Skills Development, the State is working to utilize RA as an integrated WIOA workforce development tool to serve employer workforce development needs. Furthermore, all Registered Apprenticeship programs that desire so have been added to the list of approved eligible training providers.

## **B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS**

### **Vision**

Arkansas will have a world-class workforce that is well educated, skilled, and working in order to keep Arkansas's economy competitive in the global marketplace.

### **Mission**

To promote and support a talent development system in Arkansas that offers employers, individuals, and communities the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.

#### **Arkansas's Talent Development System Philosophy**

- We believe that there must be a pipeline of skilled workers for employers and a job for every Arkansan that wants one.
- We believe that the talent development system of Arkansas must be relevant to the labor market in order to meet the needs of employers and jobseekers, and for Arkansas to compete globally.
- We believe that every Arkansan should have opportunity and access to training and education that leads to a career with gainful employment.
- We believe innovation and partnerships centered on local economic priorities maximizes effectiveness and puts the State in the best position to address local and regional workforce needs.
- We believe Arkansas's workforce system should be a viable resource for business and industry.
- We believe that in order for the talent development system to be the preferred system, the system must be accountable, flexible, and align education and training with business and industry needs.
- We believe that in order for the talent development system to be effective, we must eliminate overlap and duplication of resources and services and streamline investment of funds.

#### **Vision for the Arkansas Workforce Development Delivery System**

The publicly funded workforce system envisioned by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is quality focused, employer-driven, customer-centered, and tailored to meet the needs of regional economies. It is designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, the employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment. It aligns workforce development, education, and economic development programs with regional economic development strategies to meet the needs of local and regional employers, and provides a comprehensive, accessible and high-quality workforce development system. This is accomplished by providing all customers access to high-quality workforce development centers

that connect them with the full range of services available in their communities, whether they are looking to find jobs; build basic educational or occupational skills; earn a postsecondary certificate or degree; obtain guidance on how to make career choices; or are businesses and employers seeking skilled workers.

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board adopted a vision for the Arkansas Workforce Development Delivery System at their regular quarterly meeting in October 2015. This vision provides standards for a high quality workforce center including customer service, innovation and service design, and systems integration and high-quality staffing.

The publicly funded workforce system envisioned by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is quality-focused, employer-driven, customer-centered, and tailored to meet the needs of regional economies. It is designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, the employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment. It aligns workforce development, education, and economic development programs with regional economic development strategies to meet the needs of local and regional employers, and provide a comprehensive, accessible and high-quality workforce development system. This is accomplished by providing all customers access to high-quality workforce development centers that connect them with the full range of services available in their communities, whether they are looking to find jobs, build basic educational or occupational skills, earn a postsecondary certificate or degree, or obtain guidance on how to make career choices, or are businesses and employers seeking skilled workers.

Under WIOA, partner programs and entities that are jointly responsible for workforce and economic development, educational, and other human resource programs collaborate to create a seamless customer-focused workforce delivery system that integrates service delivery across all programs and enhances access to the programs' services. The workforce delivery system includes six core programs (Title I adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs; Title II adult education and literacy programs; Title III Wagner-Peyser program; and Title IV vocational rehabilitation program), as well as other required and optional partners identified in WIOA. In Arkansas, these programs are administered by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (Titles I, II, III) and the Rehabilitation Services portion of Title IV. The Division of Services for the Blind administers the remaining portion of Title IV. Through the Arkansas Workforce Center network, these partner programs and their service providers ensure that businesses and job seekers—a shared client base across the multiple programs identified above— have access to information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes. Under WIOA, workforce centers and their partners:

- Provide job seekers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages.
- Provide access and opportunities to all job seekers, including individuals with barriers to employment, such as individuals with disabilities, to prepare for, obtain, retain, and advance in high-quality jobs and high-demand careers.
- Enable businesses and employers to easily identify and hire skilled workers and access other supports, including education and training for their current workforce.
- Participate in rigorous evaluations that support continuous improvement of workforce centers by identifying which strategies work better for different populations.

- Ensure that high-quality integrated data inform decisions made by policy makers, employers, and job seekers.

The management of the Arkansas workforce delivery system is the shared responsibility of States, local boards, elected officials, the core WIOA partners, other required partners, and workforce center operators. The Divisions encourage all of these entities to integrate the characteristics below into their work, including developing state, regional, and local strategic plans; establishing workforce center certification criteria; examining the state, regional, and local footprint of workforce centers; conducting competitions for selecting workforce center operators; developing local Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs); updating other workforce center policies and procedures; and operating and delivering services through the Arkansas Workforce Centers.

### **Characteristics of a High-Quality Arkansas Workforce Center**

The characteristics identified below, consistent with the purpose and authorized scope of each of the programs, are designed to reflect elements that contribute to a high-quality workforce delivery system. They demonstrate the spirit and intent of the WIOA, and they will strengthen the successful integration and implementation of partner programs in Arkansas Workforce Centers. For clarity and readability the characteristics have been grouped into three functional categories: (a) Customer Service; (b) Innovation and Service Design; and (c) Systems Integration and High-Quality Staffing.

#### **Customer Service**

Arkansas Workforce Centers provide excellent customer service to job seekers, workers and businesses. Meeting the needs of job seekers, workers and businesses is important in developing thriving communities where all citizens succeed and businesses prosper. High-quality workforce centers:

- **Reflect a Welcoming Environment:** Reflect a welcoming environment to all customer groups who are served by the workforce centers. All workforce center staff are courteous, polite, responsive, and helpful to job seekers, businesses, and others who visit the workforce centers, either in person or by telephone or e-mail. Moreover, workforce center staff are sensitive to the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and are prepared to provide necessary accommodations.
- **Provide Career Services that Empower:** Provide career services that motivate, support and empower customers, including individuals with disabilities, to make informed decisions based on local and regional economic demand and effectively attain their personal employment and education goals.
- **Value Skill Development:** Value skill development by assessing and improving each individual's basic, occupational, and employability skills.
- **Create Opportunities:** Create opportunities for individuals at all skill levels and levels of experience by providing customers, including those with disabilities, as much timely, labor market, job-driven information and choice as possible related to education and training, careers, and service delivery options, while offering customers the opportunity to receive both skill-development and job placement services.
- **Improve Job Seeker Skills:** Improve the skills of job seeker and worker customers. Workforce centers offer access to education and training leading to industry-recognized credentials through the use of career pathways, apprenticeships, and other strategies

that enable customers, including those with disabilities, to compete successfully in today's global economy. They provide businesses with access to the quantity and quality of talent they need and support upskill/backfill strategies that expand job opportunities in the community.

- **Deliver Quality Business Services:** Develop, offer, and deliver quality business services that assist specific businesses and industry sectors in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent for the regional economy. To support area employers and industry sectors most effectively, workforce center staff identifies and has a clear understanding of industry skill needs, identify appropriate strategies for assisting employers, and coordinate business services activities across workforce center partner programs, as appropriate. This includes the incorporation of an integrated and aligned business services strategy among workforce center partners to present a unified voice for the workforce center in its communications with employers. Additionally, workforce centers use the forthcoming performance measure(s) on effectiveness in serving employers to support continuous improvement of these services.
- **Innovation and Service Design:** Arkansas Workforce Centers reflect innovative and effective service design.

### **Integrate Intake Process**

Use an integrated and expert intake process for all customers entering the workforce centers. Frontline staff is highly familiar with the functions and basic eligibility requirements of each program, and can appropriately assist customers and make knowledgeable referrals to partner programs, as needed and as appropriate given the authorized scope of the program.

- **Actively Engage Industry Sectors:** Design and implement practices that actively engage industry sectors and use economic and labor market information, sector strategies, career pathways, Registered Apprenticeships, and competency models to help drive skill-based initiatives.
- **Use Market Driven Principles:** Balance traditional labor exchange services with strategic talent development within a regional economy. This includes use of market-driven principles and labor market information that help to define a regional economy, its demographics, its workforce and its assets and gaps in skills and resources.
- **Use Innovative Delivery Models:** Incorporate innovative and evidence-based delivery models that improve the integration of education and training, create career pathways that lead to industry-recognized credentials, encourage work-based learning, and use state-of-the-art technology to accelerate learning and promote college and career success.

**Offer Virtual and Center-Based Services:** Include both virtual and center-based service delivery for job seekers, workers, and employers. Both methods of delivery support the talent needs of the regional economy, although each may better serve different customers with different levels of service needs at any given time. The workforce delivery system can expand its reach by delivering robust virtual services; and increasing the accessibility of those services through community partners, such as libraries, community and faith-based organizations, and other partners.

**Ensure Access to All Customers:** Ensure meaningful access to all customers. Workforce centers must be physically and programmatically accessible to all customers, including individuals with disabilities. In so doing, workforce centers use principles of universal design and human-centered design, such as flexibility in space usage; the use of pictorial, written, verbal and tactile modes to present information for customers with disabilities or limited English proficiency; providing clear lines of sight to information for seated or standing users; providing necessary accommodations; and providing adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistants. Workforce centers use assistive technology and flexible business hours to meet the range of customer needs.

### **Systems Integration and High-Quality Staffing**

Arkansas Workforce Centers operate with integrated management systems and high-quality staffing. High-quality workforce centers:

- **Reflect Robust Partnerships:** Reflect the establishment of robust partnerships among partners. The workforce center operator facilitates an integrated, co-located partnership that seamlessly incorporates services of the core partners and other workforce center partners.
- **Organize Services by Function:** Organize and integrate services by function (rather than by program); when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts. Functional alignment includes having workforce center staff who perform similar tasks serve on relevant functional teams, e.g. Skills Development Team, Business Services Team. Service integration focuses on serving all customers seamlessly (including targeted populations) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope, and requirements of each program.
- **Use Common Performance Indicators** Use common performance indicators to ensure that federal investments in employment and training programs are evidence-based, labor market driven, and accountable to participants and taxpayers. Center performance is transparent and accountable to the communities and regions served; data entry staff are trained and understand the importance of data validation, data collection processes, and the importance of accurate reporting.
- **Offer Highly Trained Career Counselors:** Staff the center with highly trained career counselors, skilled in advising job seekers of their options, knowledgeable about local labor market dynamics, aware of available services inside and outside the workforce center, and skilled in developing customers' skills for employment success.
- **Implement Integrated Policies:** Develop and implement operational policies that reflect an integrated system of performance, communication, and case management, and use technology to achieve integration and expanded service offerings.
- **Cross-Train and Equip Center Staff:** Train and equip workforce center staff in an ongoing learning process with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to provide superior service to job seekers, including those with disabilities, and businesses in an integrated, regionally focused framework of service delivery. Center staff are cross-trained, as appropriate, to increase staff capacity, expertise, and efficiency. Cross-training allows staff from differing programs to understand every program and to share their expertise about the needs of specific populations so that all staff can better serve all customers.

- Center staff is routinely trained and are keenly aware as to how their particular function supports and contributes to the overall vision of the local board.
- **Maintain Integrated Case Management:** Develop and maintain integrated case management systems that inform customer service throughout the customer's interaction with the integrated system and allow information collected from customers at intake to be captured once. Customer information is properly secured in accordance with personally identifiable information guidelines, and facilitated as appropriate, with the necessary memoranda of understanding or other forms of confidentiality and data sharing agreements, consistent with federal and state privacy laws and regulations. Data, however, would be shared with other programs, for those programs' purposes, within the workforce system only after the informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required.

*Strategic Goal 1: Develop an efficient partnership with employers, the educational system, workforce development partners, and community -based organizations to deliver a platform that will prepare a skilled workforce for existing and new employers.*

Goal 1 Objectives:

1. Expand employer partnerships through the support of industry engagement.
  - a. Identify and promote best practices (private and public) for developing and sustaining partnerships.
  - b. Expand partnership with economic development to refine sector strategies.
  - c. Improve communication/participation between education entities, local and state boards, government agencies, community-based organizations, and employers.
  - d. Increase accountability and clarity of action between all workforce related boards.
  - e. Increase the utilization of Registered Apprenticeship programs as viable talent development opportunities.
  - f. Increase connections with employers and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to provide support and employment for youth and adults with disabilities.
  - g. Partner with K-12 education, higher education, career and technical education, and adult education to provide consistent rules and eliminate barriers to implementing training programs around the State.
  - h. Explore data sharing opportunities with non-governmental organizations that are committed partners to the state's workforce center system that will lead to improved intake, referral, and case management for customers served by multiple agencies (both public and private).
  - i. Expand small business participation.

*Strategic Goal 2: Enhance service delivery to employers and jobseekers.*

Goal 2 Objectives:

- 1.



- a. Develop a common intake process for jobseekers and businesses that will efficiently connect them with services available from all workforce development partner programs and identify any barriers to employment that need to be addressed.
- b. Develop an integrated data system that will enable the sharing of information between partner agencies to more efficiently service both employers and jobseekers.
- c. Promote training that leads to industry recognized credentials and certification.
- d. Support transportable skill sets for transportable careers.
- e. Support career pathways development and sector strategy initiatives as a way to meet business and industry needs.
- f. Expand service delivery access points by the use of virtual services.
- g. Develop a common business outreach strategy with a common message that will be utilized by all workforce system partners.
- h. Develop a menu of services available at each service delivery access point that provides a list of the services and training opportunities available through Arkansas's talent development system.
- i. Utilize customer satisfaction surveys to ensure continuous improvement of the State's talent development system.
- j. Explore data sharing opportunities with non-governmental organizations that are committed partners to the state's workforce center system that will lead to improved intake, referral, and case management for customers served by multiple agencies (both public and private).

*Strategic Goal 3: Increase awareness of the State's Talent Development System.*

Goal 3 Objectives:

- 1.
  - a. Increase access to the workforce development system through a no wrong door approach to services.
  - b. Change employer and jobseeker perceptions of the workforce system.
  - c. Develop an image-building outreach campaign that educates Arkansans about the services and the career development opportunities available in the State.
  - d. Utilize technology, including social media and search engine optimization, to better connect jobseekers and employers with the talent development system in Arkansas.
  - e. Develop a user-friendly website that provides a common repository of information about career development opportunities that are relevant to K-12 education, parents, educators, adults, employers, government agencies, and the general public.

*Strategic Goal 4: Address Skills Gaps*

#### Goal 4 Objectives:

1.
  - a. Conduct a statewide skills and asset analysis to determine the skills gap present and resources available to solve the skills issue.
  - b. Develop and implement an action plan to close the basic core, technical, and soft skills gaps in Arkansas.
  - c. Analyze the effectiveness of currently used job readiness standards and ensure coordination between the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate program and the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE) program.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has a focus on helping low-income and disadvantaged populations. Workforce development professionals operate within a highly integrated one-stop career system, complete with co-located partners, procured service providers, and shared resource leveraging. However, funding and available public resources are still finite and limited, so populations with significant or multiple barriers to employment should receive priority for services. Sometimes these populations will be referred to as “hard-to-serve” or “hard-to-employ” clients.

Some special populations the workforce system serves include, but are not limited to:

- - Veterans and eligible spouses
  - Individuals with disabilities, both youth and adults
  - English language learners (Limited English Proficiency)
  - Migrant and seasonal farmworkers
  - Out-of-school youth
  - Adult and youth ex-offenders (justice-involved)
  - Public assistance recipients (TANF, SNAP, SSI, Medicaid, etc.)
  - Youth in, or previously in, foster care
  - Homeless individuals, both youth and adults
  - Runaway youth
  - Pregnant and parenting youth
  - The long-term unemployed
  - Low-income workers earning wages below self-sufficiency
  - Basic skills deficient individuals
  - The over 55 age group

The vision of the one-stop system is that service providers leverage all available assets, ensure universal access, and allocate funding for low income and special populations. Many local areas

have established more inclusive priority of service policies to ensure that their hard-to-serve and disadvantaged populations receive a focus in their service delivery.

Each of the four major goals of this plan will be implemented with the above listed special populations in mind to increase the services and enrollment of these populations. The ultimate goal is to find and help disadvantaged individuals, which in turn leads to greater overall economic prosperity for the State. Persistent, incremental accommodations or assistance can often result in a safety net that can eventually lead to huge gains for the individuals seeking help.....raising the overall level of economic prosperity for the community, when they achieve positive labor market outcomes. Thus, proactive intake of special populations helps the State attain a larger return on investment for the funding, assets and staff resources employed. This requires leadership and vision in labor market-relevant planning, including evaluation, assessments, data-driven decision-making, and collaboration to best meet the needs of special populations, jobseekers, workers and businesses alike. The four major goals, when implemented will achieve this outcome.

### **3. Performance Goals**

*Using the table provided in Appendix 1, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)*

WIOA ensures that Federal investments in employment and training programs are accountable to jobseekers, employers, customers, and taxpayers. WIOA establishes common performance measures across the four core programs and also requires other programs authorized by the Act to report on the same indicators. In addition, WIOA requires the establishment of primary indicators on credential attainment and skills gain and on the effectiveness of services to employers. Arkansas's common performance targets are located in Appendix 1.

### **4. Assessment**

*Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.*

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) is the state board given statutory responsibility with overseeing the State's talent development system, evaluating effectiveness, and ensuring continuous improvement. The Program and Performance Evaluation Committee of the Board, which is led by a private sector chair, acts in an advisory capacity to the Board to carry out the following functions:

- - Continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system in local areas, including providing assistance to local boards, one-stop operators, one-stop partners, and providers with planning and delivery of services, such as training and supportive services to workers, jobseekers, and employers;
  - Development and updating of comprehensive state performance accountability measures, including state adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in the state;

- Identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for:
- The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment;
- The development of effective local boards, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling local boards to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness; and
- Effective training programs that respond to real time labor market analysis; effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences; and that evaluate such skills; and competencies for adaptability; to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways;
- Objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers;
- The preparation of an annual report;
- The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system;
- The development of such other policies as may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the state; and
- The development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures. This would (include the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs).

This committee will meet at least quarterly to review progress of accomplishing state goals, performance outcomes, and program evaluations. The committee will give direction on needed improvements, and identify and disseminate best practices.

To date, a primary focus of the state has been the implementation of the new workforce system strategic plan and the development of a balanced scorecard approach to system evaluation. Work will continue on studies and reports to support the implementation of the systemic strategic plan and to design and launch projects to strengthen the four strategic pillars that form the foundation of the strategic plan: efficient partnerships, enhanced service delivery, increased awareness of the State's talent development system, and addressing skills gaps. Additionally, the AWDB will evaluate programs to identify any gaps or duplications in planning or service delivery, and any other programs that adversely affect the seamless delivery of services. Any problems identified by AWDB will be included in the annual report on strategic plan implementation and the results of measures taken by AWDB to address those problems.

Program and other data from across the workforce system are critical in evaluating the extent to which workforce system programs, services, and products are meeting the needs of customers and stakeholders. The collection of key data, as well as the reporting and analysis of that data, in a consistent and useful manner are essential in demonstrating outcomes, determining if changes are required or desired, and establishing benchmarks for future performance.

Under the new strategic plan, the AWDB will continue to work with system partners to improve and systematize these processes. The system evaluation structure will be redesigned, yet will continue to address all elements required by statute.

The State Board will assess the overall effectiveness of Arkansas' workforce development system by reviewing and evaluating program-specific reports on a quarterly as well as an annual basis of all workforce development activities administered by state agencies involved with workforce development. Key areas of focus include developing linkages and better coordination with vocational education, apprenticeship, adult education and literacy, vocational rehabilitation programs, and other workforce development and training programs. It is the plan of the State Board to develop data tools, such as a performance dashboard, to assist them in determining the effectiveness of the system.

In Summer 2019, the State Board began negotiating a contract with the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville to complete a comprehensive workforce system evaluation. The evaluation will use designs that employ the most rigorous analytical and statistical methods that are reasonably feasible, such as the use of control groups (20 CFR § 682.220) as appropriate:

- - Local Integration Study- Sample Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I or Title III participants for 3 Local Workforce Development Areas. This part of the evaluation will focus on two primary areas: 1. Co-enrollment and Co-funding of REQUIRED WIOA Partners and 2. Leveraging of Local Resources available in the Local Workforce Development Area.
    - Sample Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I and Title III participants for 3 Local Workforce Development Areas-to determine if, based on the participants information in the Case File, the participant might have been eligible to receive services under the required partners listed in 20 CFR § 678.400.
    - For each local area selected, interview leadership to identify partner programs and non-profits that collaborate with the Workforce Centers beyond the list of required partners above. For all partners, required in number 1 and other partners identified in 2, report whether there exists:
      - Memorandums of Understanding between the programs/entities
      - Referral Procedures
      - Training for partners regarding the services provided or alternative print materials to assist in collaboration OR
      - An alternative method to refer clients between the partners effectively

1.

a.

i. Identify and report entities in the selected local areas that provide services to the following targeted populations:

1.

a.

- i. Displaced Homemaker
- ii. Low Income
- iii. Limited English Proficiency
- iv. Migrant Worker
- v. Disabled
- vi. Veteran
- vii. Older Worker
- viii. Out of School Youth
- ix. Foster Youth
- x. Basic Skill Deficient
- xi. Ex-Offender
- xii. Single Parent
- xiii. TANF Recipient
- xiv. SNAP Recipient
- xv. SSDI Recipient
- xvi. UI Claimant
- xvii. Long-Term Unemployed

ii. For all programs and services identified in steps 1, 2, and 3, report whether sampled participants were: referred to or co-enrolled in other programs or services.

b. In the Comprehensive Centers for the 3 Local Areas selected for sampling, report case studies on effectiveness of identifying and closing Skill-Gaps

Interview staff for examples of:

- i. Skills-gap identification on either the occupation level, based on demand, or the skill-level based on interaction with an employer.
  - ii. Determine the services that were provided to address the skills-gap
  - iii. Provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the services provided in closing the skills-gap, if possible.
- 2. Review a sample of Arkansas Workforce Centers against the State's certification policy and applicable laws/regulations for four comprehensive centers and two affiliate centers. Each of the six centers selected should be located in different Local Workforce Development Areas and may be selected from Local Workforce Development Areas that overlap the 3 selected above
- 3. Conduct a statewide customer service survey for business customers of WIOA Title I and Title III receiving services over the most recent 12 months available.
- 4. Provide evaluation status reports on a monthly basis on overall project goals. These reports will be issued at the end of February, March, April, May, June, and July of 2020.
- 5. Provide a preliminary evaluation report by August 15, 2020.
- 6. Provide a final evaluation, with results, best practices, and recommendations by September 30, 2020.

### C. STATE STRATEGY

1. The state's workforce system is complex, comprising numerous programs, services, and initiatives administered by state agencies, secondary and higher education, community and technical colleges, local adult education providers, Registered Apprenticeship, and vocational rehabilitation providers. System partners are responsible for the delivery of a wide range of workforce education and training programs and related services, as well as education programs that support career preparation and advancement.

The system is interrelated because the programs and agencies serve either a common customer or are charged with achieving similar employment and education outcomes for their targeted customer groups. Therefore, the strategic planning process is designed to identify and focus on systemic issues that affect multiple parts of the system programs or agencies that address broad, big-picture workforce issues. Because the system strategic plan focuses on issues that span agencies and programs, it fulfills a unique and complementary role in the workforce system and does not duplicate the purpose or scope of other agency or program plans.

Several priority issues were identified by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board that are being addressed by system partners during our ongoing strategic planning activities.

#### **Industry Sector Partnerships**

The Arkansas Sector Partnership (ASP), a partnership of employers, state agencies, education providers, Registered Apprenticeship, and community leaders, will engage project stakeholders in ongoing regional planning efforts across the state to assess workforce development needs

and job demand. Input obtained from regional planning efforts will be used to adjust training (on an as needed basis) to meet employer needs. The ASP will utilize a regional planning sector framework that focuses on critical factors that include: 1) existing labor market information and other workforce related data; 2) regional input from community stakeholders; 3) industry sector/employer input; 4) aligned education and training activities to meet employer needs; 5) aligning business services/workforce services/case management services to serve workforce customers (both employers and dislocated workers); and 6) continuous improvement and sustainability after the life of the grant.

ASP will engage in regional planning activities, structured around WIOA regions, including assessing the workforce development and economic landscape to identify employer training needs, industry trends, and areas of job growth. The resulting information, data, and analysis will serve as a basis for serving dislocated workers and employers under ASP as well as serve as the cornerstone of WIOA regional and statewide planning activities. The regional and sector strategies planning activities will include career pathways to design career ladders that will focus on hard to serve individuals.

Both geographic and industry-based sector strategies are proven to be effective methods for aligning workforce service providers and community partners to address the occupational based training needs of employers.

The ASP regional planning process will also assess existing workforce services and community resources infrastructure to support workforce development efforts emphasizing the needs of hard to serve populations including those participating in career pathways. The ASP will engage in the following activities to ensure the development of a comprehensive regional and sector plan:

- - Identifying aligned industry credentials for those skills and competencies needed.
  - Assessing how well those skills and competencies are reflected in existing training programs and curricula; and
  - Identifying and mapping the necessary skills and competencies for in-demand jobs;
  - Establishing social and/or peer learning networks among regions using sector strategies;
  - Training for staff in State and local areas necessary to facilitate regional planning and implement regional strategies;
  - Developing regional plans;
  - Asset mapping and other analysis, such as SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats);
  - Acquisition, analysis, and utilization of LMI and workforce information to identify regional trends;
  - Partnership and program development with stakeholders, employers, and training programs;



This structure will also ensure that employers and regional industry representatives are actively engaged in designing and implementing strategies in five key areas: 1) serving on the project's leadership team; 2) helping implement program strategies and goals; 3) identifying and mapping the necessary skills and competencies for the programs; 4) assisting with curriculum development and designing the program; and 5) assisting with the design of an assessment and/or credential that will address industry skill needs.

Finally, the state utilized WIOA Set-Aside funds to award additional funding to each of the state's ten (10) Local Workforce Development Areas. This additional funding was used for regional planning purposes and designed to assist the areas in their ongoing broad strategic approaches.

### Career Pathways

Arkansas leaders recognize the need for an education and training system that addresses the state's economic challenges. Through the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (CPI), the state has sought to coordinate publicly funded education with social services and workforce and economic development programs to produce a better-trained workforce and promote economic growth. The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative is a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector and to advance over time to successively higher level of education and employment in that sector. Each step on a career pathway is designed explicitly to prepare workers and students for the next level of employment and education. Using the career pathways framework, the workforce system seeks to target jobs in industries of importance to local economies and create avenues of advancement for current workers, jobseekers, and future labor market entrants, as well as a supply of qualified workers for employers.

Community colleges play a linchpin role in career pathways. The career pathways framework promotes systemic reform for community colleges -- providing a model that better aligns their various mission areas of workforce development, academic credentialing, transfer preparation, and remediation with the needs of employers. Pathways commonly feature community colleges working in partnership with other educational entities, workforce and economic development agencies, employer and labor groups, and social service providers to ensure investments in education and training pay off for the region's economic vitality. Students entering into adult literacy or college remedial coursework are better able to advance to and succeed in college-level programs, and all students can more readily earn postsecondary credentials and make progress toward a career. Incumbent workers are provided training opportunities that help increase their skills and subsequent wages.

CPI, which began serving clients in fall 2005, seeks to improve the earnings through postsecondary education attainment of Arkansas's low-income "TANF-eligible" adults by enabling them to work in industries of regional importance. Administered by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) with funding from the Division of Workforce Services (DWS), ADHE/CPI provides an opportunity for 25 campuses to develop Career Pathways Initiatives. Through the implementation of WIOA, the State seeks to use lessons learned and the framework created through the CPI to educate and encourage other jobseekers to utilize career pathways as a method for preparing for their eventual career.

CPI's objectives for program participants are:

-

- Improve the level of engagement among educators and employers to generate work opportunities for students and serve the workforce needs of the private sector.
- Increased job attainment and job retention in key industries; and
- Increased attainment of college-level certificates and associate degrees;
- Increased enrollment in college-level certificate and associate degree programs;

Finally, Arkansas has become aware that some of the WIOA program partners are currently utilizing a software product that helps job seekers build career plans based upon their individual knowledge, skills, and abilities from previous jobs and education. The product then recommends occupations, career clusters, training programs, and available jobs. The software program is applicable to all types of workforce clients: youth, dislocated workers, TANF or SNAP E&T participants, Veterans, individuals with disabilities, and more.

In early 2018, discussions began in earnest to implement the use of this product across all WIOA programs and participants.

### Registered Apprenticeship

Many of the things that keep Arkansas's many industries operative today were built long ago by trade and craftsmen. Fewer people are choosing a career in the trades, even as demand and unemployment rates continue to escalate. Arkansas, like many states in America, is suffering from a widening skills gap that desperately needs to be filled. That means, for everyone who enjoys modern day necessities like electricity, indoor plumbing, paved roads, air conditioning, homes, and buildings to live and work in, things could take a downward turn, because craftsmen and tradesmen are retiring at an alarming high rate, and not enough people are training to take their place.

Tradesmen and craftsmen are needed now more than ever. For those men and women that do step up to fill the ever-growing expertise gap in Arkansas, big opportunities await. From work-while-you learn apprenticeships to career-elevating college and technical courses, there are hundreds of ways to kick start a craft career in Arkansas.

Support for Registered Apprenticeship continues to grow in the State due to the relationship between the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship, the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coordination Steering Committee (a Governor appointed committee), the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, the Office of Skills Development, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board who collaborate continuously to address key issues regarding workforce development needs throughout the State of Arkansas.

As a way to attract more workers to Registered Apprenticeship, the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coordination Steering Committee established a website to inform jobseekers who may be interested. <http://arkansasapprenticeship.com/>. This website informs prospective apprentices of the occupations, the training, and what employment opportunities exist.

### Closing the Gap 2020 - A Master Plan for Higher Education in Arkansas

A master plan for improving Arkansas higher education attainment was presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board on October 30, 2015. The 2015-2020 five year planning cycle adopted in this plan is a critical component in the long-term objective to reach the 2025 goal of a 60 percent post-secondary attainment rate in Arkansas, increasing from the current estimate of 43.4 percent. By 2020, the plan is to reduce the educational attainment gap

in Arkansas by increasing the number of postsecondary credentials by 50 percent over the 2013-2014 academic year levels; increasing the number of certificates awarded to 19,200; associate's degrees to 12,700; and bachelor's degrees to 19,900.

As the State moves to the implementation stage of the Closing the Gap Master Plan, the plan has been divided into core subsections. Each subsection has a committee tasked with finding the best way to implement the policy that will help achieve the goals of the master plan related to their subsection. The subsections include:

- Communication Strategies
  - Non-Formula Funding
    - Institutional Funding
    - Affordability
    - Student Success Innovation
    - Remediation
    - College Readiness
    - Adult Learners

#### Supporting Goals

Below is a summary of proposed goals from the Closing the Gap 2020 Master Plan. The Closing the Gap 2020 Master Plan is accessible online at [https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/adhe/Closing\\_the\\_Gap\\_2020.pdf](https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/adhe/Closing_the_Gap_2020.pdf).

GOAL 1: Raise completion and graduation rates of colleges and universities by 10 percent.

- - Raise first year retention rates of students to Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) regional averages.
  - Reduce the time needed for students to complete remedial requirements.
    - - Reduce the percentage of students needing remediation to prepare them for college-level course work.

GOAL 2: By fall 2018, increase the enrollment of adult students, age 25 to 54, by 50 percent.

- - Improve communication of the value of higher education to non-traditional students
  - Reduce the remedial course enrollments for adults by 50 percent through alternative means of preparing adults for college-level work

GOAL 3: Raise the attainment rates of underserved student groups in the state by 10 percent.

- - Raise completion rates of underserved student groups equal to other students.

- Raise the underserved student college-going rate to equal that of other students
- Raise the overall college-going rate for all student groups by 5 percent from 50.1 percent to 55.1 percent

#### GOAL 4: Improve College Affordability through Effective Resource Allocation

- - Re-allocate institutional spending to maximize efficiency and effectiveness
  - Allocate 25 percent of state scholarship funds to need-based programs
  - Reduced time to degree for students

#### Jobs for Arkansas's Graduates (JAG)

The Jobs for Arkansas's Graduate (JAG) program is a state affiliate of the national Jobs for America's Graduates. Middle and high school students, who are experiencing barriers to graduation, are provided a comprehensive set of services designed to keep them in school through graduation and improve the rate of success in achieving their education and career goals. Along with the academic support, JAG also provides work-based learning experiences that will assist students to further their education and training in pursuit of a rewarding career.

The JAG model is based on and evaluated by a series of performance measures and standards, which allow the program to report student outcomes. The data collected and reported includes student demographics, contact hours with students, graduation rate, direct work experience, job placement one year after graduation, and employment outcomes.

The former Arkansas Department of Career Education and Arkansas Division of Workforce Services established a strong partnership to ensure Arkansas high students graduate and continue on the path to success either in today's workforce in or postsecondary education.

#### Arkansas Career Coach Program

The College and Career program is designed to motivate and support Arkansas students to achieve their goals as it relates to college and career planning. Students may begin working with a Career Coach in the 8th grade (7th, if enrolled in Career Orientation) with continued services through high school graduation. Career Coaches work in partnership with the Career Orientation instructors and school counselors to assist with the development and revision of the student's college and career plans. The College and Career Coach program provides assistance and information for resources in the areas of: academic tutoring, career counseling, mentoring, financial guidance, and other supports necessary for postsecondary education/training access, retention, and success.

The Arkansas College and Career Coach Program was introduced as a pilot initiative in January 2010. The program was administered through the former Arkansas Department of Career Education and established partnerships with the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and Arkansas Division of Workforce Services. During the pilot phase, the program was designed to provide college and career planning services and activities to middle/high school students within the twenty-one most economically challenged counties across the state of Arkansas. After the completion of the pilot phase, the program demonstrated a positive impact in the areas of college-going rate, ACT Scores, remediation rates, and financial aid applications and was expanded beyond the initial twenty-one counties.

#### **Sector and Regional Planning**

One of the functions of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board found in 20 CFR § 679.130 and under WIOA sec. 101(d) is assisting the Governor in the:

"Development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system, [including the] development and expansion of strategies to meet the needs of employers, workers, and job seekers particularly through industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

In a 2019 USDOL Region IV meeting, the USDOL Regional Administrator introduced the State of Colorado Workforce Development Council's Sector Strategies Plan. Arkansas has developed a similar strategy.

On February 9, 2017, - Release of Issuance PY16-10 to Local Workforce Development Boards- "Guidance for Implementation of Sector Strategies under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act".

<https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/src/files/PY16-10-Guidance-for-Implementation-of-Sector-Strategies-under-the-WIOA.pdf>

June 8, 2018 - Release of Issuance PY17-09 to Local Workforce Development Boards- "Applications for Regional Planning and Industry/Sector Partnerships Funding Assistance".

<https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/src/files/PY-17-09-LWDB-Assistance-Proposals-Issuance.pdf>

CURRENT- Planning adjustments to Regional planning fund requirements, including increased allotments (funding permitted) and reporting requirements that would allow Arkansas to report on Sector Strategy implementation.

Finally, a comprehensive review of the Colorado program identified the following areas in which Arkansas can make improvements in the development of its system.

**Quick GAP between AR and CO information, based on the website:**

Colorado Web Page	Key Content	Currently Available at ADWS	Next Steps and Additional Requirements
Sector Partnerships	Map of Active Sector Partnerships	Not Available	ADWS would require LWDB receiving Sector Planning funds to provide a list of engaged employers in the sector partnerships and how this aligns with local plans.
Sector Partnerships Community of Practice	Webinars by Sector	Not Available	ADWS and LWDBs would need to establish the sector partnerships before this would be feasible, so no change in current strategy.
Sector Partnership Directory	For each Sector Partnership established: POC, Chairs, web pages for the sector, local area, Conveners	Not Available	Currently, ADWS would require LWDB receiving Sector Planning funds to provide a list of engaged employers in the sectors in their reporting. We would need to provide

Colorado Web Page	Key Content	Currently Available at ADWS	Next Steps and Additional Requirements
			additional support or funding to establish a web page for each sector as a later improvement.
<b>Colorado Web Page</b>	<b>Key Content</b>	<b>Currently Available at ADWS</b>	<b>Next Steps and Additional Requirements</b>
Sector Partnership Technical Assistance	Contact information for TA and resources	Access to Technical Assistance from Staff and other resources could be gathered and provided on a similar web page	
Industry Intermediary Consortium	List of engaged Trade Associations		This might not be necessary at first. ADWS could provide the information in the Sector Partnership page, for each partnership the association is participating. A strategy should be considered for developing and sustaining relationships with industry associations and professional associations (i.e., SHRM, etc.). This provides an opportunity for broadened industry impact across several companies in a region. Currently, ADWS would require LWDBs receiving Sector Planning funds to report Trade Associations similarly to engaged businesses.
Statewide Education Sector Partnership	NA	NA	NA- No similar statewide sector partnerships are in place, but might result from further efforts.

Colorado Web Page	Key Content	Currently Available at ADWS	Next Steps and Additional Requirements
Business Engagement Guide	Overview and Access to a 31 pg document for engagement	TPMA study material and other resources are currently available to share on a similar website	*Could be combined with the Technical Assistance page
Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
Complete	Relatively Administrative	Mostly Administrative	Mostly Administrative
Guidance to LWDBs and Initiation of Sector Planning Funds	<p>Increase Funding Levels Available and allow flexibility for Sector OR Regional Planning</p> <p>Add requirements to engage at least 3 employers, establish chairs, support meetings and conventions, engage trade associations, report participating businesses and associations, and post meeting materials on their website.</p>	<p>Establish web pages:</p> <p>Technical Assistance (and resources)</p> <p>Business Engagement Guide</p> <p>Sector Partnerships</p> <p>Sector Partnership Directory to mirror Colorado resources</p>	Add Sector Meeting information on the individual Local WDB pages we have already established, which would mirror the "community of practice" page in Colorado

2. Center to WIOA is the integration of service delivery amongst multiple workforce and talent development programs. Arkansas has strong partnerships among state agencies, two- and four-year educational institutions, economic development, Registered Apprenticeship, and community-based organizations. A priority of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board and central to the implementation of the strategic plan is to prevent and eliminate duplication across programs and align core programs. Alignment of core and optional programs will be made possible by the following strategies.

**Reflect Robust Partnerships** Reflect the establishment of robust partnerships among partners. The workforce center operator facilitates an integrated, co-located partnership that seamlessly incorporates services of the core partners and other workforce center partners.

**Organize Service by Function** Organize and integrate services by function (rather than by program); when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts. Functional alignment includes having workforce center staff who perform similar tasks serve on relevant functional teams, e.g. Skills Development Team, Business Services Team. Service integration focuses on serving all customers seamlessly (including targeted populations) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope, and requirements of each program.

**Use Common Performance Indicators** Use common performance indicators to ensure that federal investments in employment and training programs are evidence-based, labor market driven, and accountable to participants and taxpayers. Center performance is transparent and accountable to the communities and regions served; data entry staff are trained and understand the importance of data validation, data collection processes, and the importance of accurate reporting.

**Offer Highly Trained Career Counselors** Staff the center with highly trained career counselors, skilled in advising job seekers of their options, knowledgeable about local labor market dynamics, aware of available services inside and outside the workforce center, and skilled in developing customers' skills for employment success.

**Implement Integrated Policies** Develop and implement operational policies that reflect an integrated system of performance, communication, and case management, and use technology to achieve integration and expanded service offerings.

TANF and WIOA programs will enter a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate and establish a common intake, assessment, and client engagement model. A low-income job seeker may qualify for the Medicaid or SNAP program, under their respective eligibility and enrollment rules and be referred to TANF through MOUs with the Arkansas Department of Human Services. TANF staff will be instructed to engage these individuals through a low touch model, and offer referral services to education and workforce partners who could best service them. And, where these job-seekers can be considered TANF eligible, they can then be enrolled in direct TANF services provisioning through TANF funded programs, as well as optimize service provisioning through co-enrollment with partnering programs. TANF and WIOA programs have also agreed in the MOU to leverage their existing IT systems to achieve these objectives and others, such as the development of referral forms to streamline services to these clients.

**Cross-Train and Equip Center Staff** Train and equip workforce center staff in an ongoing learning process with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to provide superior service to job seekers, including those with disabilities, and businesses in an integrated, regionally focused framework of service delivery. Center staff are cross-trained, as appropriate, to increase staff capacity, expertise, and efficiency. Cross-training allows staff from differing programs to understand every program and to share their expertise about the needs of specific populations so that all staff can better serve all customers. Center staff is routinely trained and are keenly aware as to how their particular function supports and contributes to the overall vision of the local board.

**Maintain Integrated Case Management** Develop and maintain integrated case management systems that inform customer service throughout the customer's interaction with the integrated system and allow information collected from customers at intake to be captured once. Customer information is properly secured in accordance with personally identifiable information guidelines, and facilitated as appropriate, with the necessary memoranda of understanding or other forms of confidentiality and data sharing agreements, consistent with federal and state privacy laws and regulations. Data, however, would be shared with other programs, for those programs' purposes, within the workforce system only after the informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required.

### III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

#### A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

##### 1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS



The roles and responsibilities of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) were established under Arkansas Act 907 of 2015 and WIOA Section 101(d). The AWDB has policymaking and oversight responsibilities for the Arkansas Workforce Development system. Additionally, Arkansas Act 907 of 2015 gives the AWDB responsibility for oversight of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

The AWDB operates under a committee structure of four standing committees, which include the Executive Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, Program and Performance Evaluation Committee, and TANF Oversight Committee.

The board and committees meet quarterly and may call special meetings as necessary. Each of the statutory roles and responsibilities outlined in WIOA Section 101(d) and A.C.A. §15-4-3706 have been assigned to the committee which best fits the function of the role or task. The chairs of the standing committees report to the full board at each quarterly meeting their activities and progress in accomplishing their goals.

### **Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee shall be formed and meet as needed between the quarterly board meetings at the call of the chair of the executive committee or upon the request of seventy-five percent (75%) of the executive committee members.

The Executive Committee shall have the authority of the Board to act during the interim between Board meetings but shall defer to the Board, whenever practical, action on matters of major policy implications.

### **Strategic Planning Committee**

The Strategic Planning Committee shall act in an advisory capacity to the Board to carry out the following functions:

- The development, implementation, and modification of the state workforce development plan
- The review of statewide policies, of statewide programs, and of recommendations on actions that should be taken by the state to align workforce development programs in the state in a manner that supports a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system in the state, including the review and provision of comments on the state plan, if any, for programs and activities of one-stop partners that are not core programs;
- The development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system in the state, including:
- The development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported under the workforce development system;
- The development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the state's one-stop delivery system, including the development of—
- The development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access to, and improve the quality of, services and activities provided through the one-stop delivery system, including such improvements to:
- Enhance digital literacy skills;

- Accelerate the acquisition of skills and recognized postsecondary credentials by participants;
- Strengthen the professional development of providers and workforce professionals; and
- Ensure such technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas;
- The development of allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for employment and training activities for adults, and youth workforce investment activities, to local areas.

### **Program and Performance Evaluation Committee**

The Program and Performance Evaluation Committee shall act in an advisory capacity to the Board to carry out the following functions:

- The continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system in local areas, including providing assistance to local boards, one-stop operators, one-stop partners, and providers with planning and delivering services, including training services and supportive services, to support effective delivery of services to workers, jobseekers, and employers;
- The development and updating of comprehensive state performance accountability measures, including state adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in the state;
- The identification and dissemination of information on best practices
- including best practices for:
  - The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment;
  - The development of effective local boards, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling local boards to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness; and
  - Effective training programs that respond to real time labor market analysis, that effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences, and that evaluate such skills, and competencies for adaptability, to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways;
- The objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers;
- The preparation of an annual report;
- The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system;
- The development of such other policies as may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the state; and

- The development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures (including the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs).

### **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Oversight Committee**

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Oversight Committee provides oversight of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program and ensures that all program participants are receiving the assistance, information, and the services needed to help these low-income parents prepare for and connect with employment that will lead to a self-sufficient wage.

## **2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY**

### **A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY**

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services shall use funds made available under WIOA Title I to support local workforce development board activities to provide services through the adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs. Services through these programs include career services such as outreach, intake, and orientation; initial assessment; labor exchange services; eligibility for services; referrals to programs; performance and cost information; information on unemployment insurance; financial aid information; and follow-up services. Additionally, for those who qualify, training and supportive services will be provided. Training services may include occupational skills training, on-the job training (OJT), Registered Apprenticeships, incumbent worker training, and skill upgrading and retaining.

The ADWS will provide labor exchange services through funds provided under WIOA Title III including labor market information to the individuals seeking services. The information will include information on local, regional and national labor market areas such as:

- Job vacancies in labor market areas
  - Information on job skills necessary to obtain the jobs
    - Local, in-demand occupations and related earning potential
- Opportunities for advancement in those occupations

Additionally, One-Stops and partners must provide appropriate services for individuals to obtain or retain employment. These services include, but are not limited to:

- Individual Employment Plan (IEP)
  - Career planning and counseling (no longer called case management)
    - Comprehensive assessment
      - Occupational skills assessment
      - Short-term prevocational services

- Internship and work experience including transitional jobs and industry partnerships
- Workforce preparation
- Out-of-area job search
- English language acquisition
- Financial literacy

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services - Adult Education Section shall use funds made available under section 222(a)(2) for the following adult education and literacy activities (Section 203 of WIOA):

- Adult Education
  - Literacy
    - Workplace adult education and literacy activities
      - Family literacy activities
      - English language acquisition activities
      - Integrated English literacy and civics education
      - Workforce preparation activities; or
      - Integrated education and training that:
        - Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
      - is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

**Adult Education and Literacy Activities** include instruction and education services below a postsecondary level in reading, writing, and speaking in English, and computing and solving problems. These services increase a student's ability to achieve a secondary school diploma or equivalent, transition to postsecondary education and training, and obtain employment.

**Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities** include instruction at a workplace or an off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce. will include contextualized literacy, English language acquisition, and workforce preparation at Educational Functioning Levels appropriate to learners. Successful workplace literacy activities involve strong partnerships with employers or employee organizations in the design and delivery of the instructional program based on workplace needs.

**Family Literacy Activities** include interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children. To offer family literacy activities as defined in WIOA requires coordination with other services for the children's component.

**English Language Acquisition** includes adult education and literacy activities for English language learners with an additional skill requirement, comprehension of the English language.

**Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education** will provide Immigrants and English learners access to English language acquisition services and civics education and may include workforce training. English infused with civics education helps immigrants and English learners understand the American system of government and what it means to be a citizen and to be involved in civics activities. To live and work in the United States means not only a command of the language, but equally important are the civics-related skills and knowledge necessary to become involved parents, workers, and community members. Therefore, every adult education and literacy council program offering English language acquisition services will also include civics education.

**Workforce Preparation** includes activities, programs, or services designed to help individuals acquire a combination of basic academic skills and employability skills such as critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills. These activities include competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment. Workforce preparation skills will be integrated in the adult basic education and literacy curriculum, therefore, occurring concurrently with adult basic and literacy skills instruction

**Integrated education and training activities** include concurrent instruction in basic academic skills and/or English language acquisition skills, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training contextualized for specific occupations or occupational clusters. Education will be provided in the context of industry-specific needs that involve employers and is integrated with occupational skills training. Programs will provide work-relevant instruction through career pathways and integrated education and training activities. Instruction will be offered at Educational Functioning Levels appropriate to learners. The purpose of instruction will be education and career advancement. Providers will assist students in their roles as parents and family members by providing foundational skills that enable them to support their children's learning needs and improve economic self-sufficiency for their families.

Funds may not be used for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

Allowable activities, referred to as vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, are those activities necessary to assist an individual with a disability to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain competitive integrated employment. In general, services can be divided into pre-employment transition, transition, and vocational rehabilitation services. Required pre-employment transition services target students with disabilities to better determine career interests by providing job exploration; work-based learning experiences; counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education; workplace readiness training; and instruction in self-advocacy. Transition services assist students with disabilities in transitioning from secondary education into postsecondary education and employment. An individualized plan for employment (IPE) is the foundation for vocational rehabilitation services. The IPE, jointly developed by the client and VR counselor, takes into consideration the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. It identifies a client's vocational goal,

necessary services, and roles and responsibilities related to the achievement of the goal. Services provided could include vocational counseling, vocational training, restoration, assistive technology, on-the-job training, and job placement.

The Division of Services for the Blind engages in activities similar to its partner Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. One hundred percent of DSB-funded services are focused on the most significantly disabled, individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. DSB provides this population with specialized vocational rehabilitation counseling services, which are designed to assist persons who are blind or have visual impairments to prepare for employment that is commensurate within their abilities, interests and informed choice, and is consistent with their strengths, resources, concerns and capabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in conjunction with their consumers develop employability plans, which outline the barriers, services, and steps to reach their employment goals. Referrals are made to partner programs to provide any additional services necessary to meet or exceed the employment goals in their plans. In addition to vocational counseling, DSB funds transition services; training for careers that are in demand; post-secondary education; placement with employers; accommodations needed for job placement or retaining employment; restorative medical services; internships; paid work experiences; pre-apprenticeship training; vending stand opportunities under the Randolph- Shepherd Act; and business ownership opportunities under the Small Business Program. In recent years, DSB has begun placing more emphasis on the employer as a customer.

Beginning in 2014, the core programs have worked diligently together to align services across core programs and other program partners and are including other non-core programs such as TANF, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Career and Technical Education, Carl D. Perkins secondary and post-secondary programs, Registered Apprenticeship and others. Staff from the core agencies is actively engaged in training opportunities that include all operational levels of the core partners and key stakeholders named in the combined plan. Arkansas has a good history of core programs alignment, but to better facilitate these activities, strategies including a common intake process, inter-agency data sharing, case management integration, and co-location of resources when possible, are being developed and implemented. This cross-agency team is currently in the process of developing a state policy regarding co-enrollment and developing common intake processes. This process will encompass all programs located in the Arkansas Workforce Centers and will not be limited to only core programs.

#### B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

The best way to ensure that activities continue to be aligned with programs and activities provided by mandatory one-stop partners is through communication. The purpose of the WIOA law is to ensure that core state agencies work together to enhance the workforce development system. As a state, we have created a combined state plan that will serve as the blueprint of how the system will work. Local Workforce Investment Boards have been restructured to ensure that all core agencies are represented including employers and other optional-one stop partners. It is up to the local Workforce Investment Board to ensure that local activities are aligned with the State Plan and the law.

To best align services and resources, core and optional programs will develop joint policies and initiatives that spur collaboration, braiding of resources, and support the inclusion of key stakeholders in development and implementation. In order to continue to be inclusive of other programs and align with all workforce development resources in Arkansas, it is imperative that the work of the WIOA Roundtable continue and transition from an implementation body to a coordination and continuous improvement body. By doing so, we set ourselves up to more

efficiently bring in other federal, state, and private or non-profit resources to the benefit of our citizens. By utilizing this design, the WIOA Roundtable can approach additional partner programs with a united front.

Through the WIOA Roundtable, optional partners are at the table including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Career and Technical Education, Carl D. Perkins (secondary and post-secondary), SNAP Employment & Training, and Job for Veterans State Grant. While these partners are optional, we consider their input as vital to making the Arkansas workforce development system streamlined and effective. Every policy developed for statewide implementation is reviewed by subject matter experts from both core and non-core programs.

#### C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

All core partners provide services to individuals within statutory requirements of the programs. Since the implementation of WIOA, leaders from core, mandatory partners, and several optional partners in the workforce development system have been working to better align programming to best serve the people of Arkansas.

Through the forming of the WIOA Roundtable, an interagency team of core and non-core partner programs, opportunities for leveraging resources to better serve the needs of people utilizing the workforce system have been developed and the shared knowledge of programs have led to better coordination of services. This process is continuing to evolve and within the next four years, partners anticipate new systems, policies, and networks to seamlessly and efficiently align services for individuals. The assumption is all individuals who access the workforce system are eligible for all services provided by workforce partners, and it is the obligation of the system to serve these individuals to the highest level of satisfaction and outcome.

For example, currently Arkansas Rehabilitation Services has counselors that come to the Adult Education programs to provide services to eligible students. Likewise, adult education providers have offered classes onsite at some of the Rehabilitation offices. This has been proven to be very beneficial for students because it reduces the barriers of transportation and increases the support clients may need to successfully transition.

In addition, both Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and local workforce boards offer on the job training to clients who qualify. Several adult education students have been able to gain valuable work experience as well as a salary while working towards their high school equivalency diploma.

In addition, both Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and local workforce boards offer on the job training to clients who qualify. Several adult education students have been able to gain valuable work experience as well as a salary while working towards their high school equivalency diploma.

Core, mandatory, and optional partners are meeting on a monthly basis to discuss implementation and service delivery issues. Through this venue, program alignment, performance accountability, policy integration, data integration, infrastructure funding, and streamlined services are discussed. Committees have been established on each of these topics and the workgroups meeting at least monthly, and oftentimes more frequently. The four core state agencies are jointly developing policy guidance for use across programs to ensure that coordination of services and activities is occurring. This jointly developed guidance is then shared with the Arkansas Workforce Development Board for consideration and adoption.

statewide. One such jointly developed policy is the Arkansas Workforce Centers Certification Policy, which establishes standards for use by local core, mandatory, and optional partner personnel to ensure a high level of services in the workforce centers and to support the coordination of services delivered by all partners. In order for centers to become certified and eventually meet excellence standards, partners must come together to coordinate activities, align services, and meet the needs of both jobseekers and employers.

The goal of the certification process is to develop a world-class workforce center network that goes well beyond the minimal requirements established by the Federal Workforce Investment Act. It is critical to make the centers user friendly and attractive, creating a public image that is inviting to jobseekers, education seekers, and employers seeking skills and talent in the local labor markets.

The certification policy brings all the tools approved by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) into a single reference for Local Workforce Development Board members and partner programs involved in certifying or recertifying local Arkansas Workforce Centers. It is the intent of the AWDB to provide this instrument as a guide to what is expected, not to provide the means of how it is to be accomplished. Ongoing organizing, implementation, and ensuring continuous improvement of the local certification process are the responsibility of the local boards and partners.

Included are minimum core standards that must be a part of the local certification and recertification process. In a clear, concise manner this guide documents the Arkansas Workforce Board Certification Process needed by the local board when conducting certification site visits. It also reviews the Quality Assurance Process to be used by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) to ensure minimum standards are met and that the Arkansas Workforce Center brand name is protected. It is expected that each local workforce investment area may supplement these core standards with additional locally applicable criteria and performance measures to ensure continuous improvement.

Certification is not just about a one-time designation. It is an ongoing process that keeps all parties involved and achieving at high performance levels. As such, the certification process also allows for achieving excellence standards as continuous improvement planning occurs. This certification process serves as an opportunity to continually re-examine, improve, and revise procedures to ensure that the Arkansas workforce development system is a primary asset in Arkansas's economic growth and subsequent high quality of life.

The local certification process also requires workforce center partners to coordinate their services to employers through the development of business service liaison teams operating under a common message and clear menu of services among all partners.

The excellence standards of the certification criteria require the following higher levels of coordination:

- Coordination with economic development and social service leaders
- Coordinated marketing messages among all workforce center partners
- Coordination with other workforce centers, especially business service liaison teams from other workforce centers

The Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) Program. In Arkansas has two program operations managers responsible for Field Staff and Fiscal Services. These two managers and the Fiscal staff are located in the Central Office and provide support to the seven TAA program monitors that are



out—stationed across the state. These seven program monitors oversee the 16 TAA workforce specialists who work directly with TAA clients in our 34 local offices. These TAA specialists meet individually with the clients and conduct initial assessment services while also providing more detailed program information. During these one—on—one assessments the client is provided with information regarding the other supportive services available to them via the Workforce Center to include WIOA and TANF. When WIOA or TANF staff is present the clients are escorted to the appropriate staff member. In the event that WIOA or TANF representatives are not then available, a referral form is completed so staff can arrange to meet with the client at a later time. Having TAA staff co—located at the local offices with other partner programs is extremely beneficial in providing supportive services to clients. Having all partners share a common space builds professional relationships and leads to all members of the group being vested in the outcomes for our mutual clients. These relationships also allow staff to identify trends and share information in a way which provides the client with their best chance for success.

#### D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

Since the passage of WIOA, the Arkansas WIOA Roundtable, consisting of core partners, meets monthly to share information, identify resources, and build relationships. Because of the large number of members, working committees are utilized to work on specific issues and the policy committee is tasked with the coordination, alignment and provision of services to employers. A working group has been established that consists of leaders from each agency tasked with business relations from all of the core programs and key workforce stakeholders. The intent of this partnership is to allow for all business relations representatives to be versed in the services provided by all core programs and key stakeholders in order to provide this information to employers.

In 2015, an informal study was conducted to determine all of the contact points with employers that are made by the various agencies. These contact points were defined to include the purpose and need for employer engagement. This information was shared with more than 250 managers, directors, and leaders in core and non-core programs during a partners meeting in the fall of 2015. This information will be used by the working group to establish a streamlined process for making contact with employers that will meet requirements set forth in the Arkansas Workforce Center Certification criteria.

The Arkansas Workforce Center Certification Criteria requires the center to have a business liaison team as the single point of contact for business services. It is expected that staff involved with initiating employer contacts will participate on the team in a coordinated outreach program under the Arkansas Workforce Center name and marketing approach. The team will consist of business contact staff from all partner programs and will, at a minimum, provide the following structure and coordination in approaching the business community:

- A team leader to coordinate the activities of the team
- A coordinated “script” to market the system to employers
- Use of the Arkansas Workforce Center name as the primary marketing approach, with agency specialty areas (i.e. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Services for the Blind, DVOP/LVER Veterans Services) presented as a part of the overall system as needed
- An information sharing strategy that makes contact results available to all team members

- A clear menu of services across all partners
- A division of duties with employer sector specializations as deemed appropriate for quality customer service
- Multiple agency participation with clear cost and information sharing commitments
- At a minimum, job search, employer contacts, job orders, or job development leads performed by any center staff as a result of outreach will be entered into the Wagner-Peyser database (Arkansas Job Link)

Arkansas has received several discretionary grants from the U.S. Department of Labor to address workforce development and training needs of Arkansas employers and jobseekers. Specifically through the Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathway Initiative, Arkansas Sector Partnership, and the Arkansas Job Driven National Emergency Grant, the State has been able to connect with numerous employers throughout the state to identify existing and emerging occupations and training needs. These grants have enabled the state to be very flexible and immediately responsive to the training needs identified by employers. Through the use of project management teams comprised of core, mandatory, and optional partners in addition to Registered Apprenticeship, two- and four-year educational institutions, local workforce development boards, and non-profit organizations, the State is able to most effectively deliver services through these grants and maximize on subject matter expertise from all involved.

Arkansas understands that the WIOA legislative mandate has changed workforce development. As such, we are currently seeking a “business facing” workforce development solution that is a collaborative platform to connect people, jobs, programs, and data to advance the economic viability of our state.

The Division of Workforce Services - Adult Education Section offers a trademarked job readiness program, Workforce Alignment for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) in which students can earn up to six certificates in industrial, employability, customer service I and II, office technology, and bank teller. Adult Education WAGE Coordinators work with local employers to customize training that meets the needs of their workforce. In order to stay abreast of employers’ needs, the WAGE Advisory Committee is made up of 51% business and industry and chaired by an employer.

### **Salesforce Implementation**

Salesforce is a customer relations management tool that will assist business services teams to track and report business engagement activities across partner programs. In Fall 2019, the initial implementation of Salesforce began and allowed business services staff to begin recording actual business engagement activity in the system. As we launched the system, we established a “working group” to assist in developing some ground rules (or protocols) for moving us forward utilizing the tool. The “working group” also takes the lead in working through any issues that may arise using the system and determining their potential solutions.

The Salesforce tool is being developed in four phases (or sprints) that include:

- Sprint 1 – Business Leads and Account Management
- Sprint 2 – Training Application
- Sprint 3 – Reports and Dashboards
- Sprint 4 – Needs Assessment and Skills Gap Analysis

The testing, development, and training on the product are complete.

Currently, evaluating several “next steps” to broaden the base of Salesforce users as well as enhance the system’s value through collaborative efforts and data integration.

Here is a listing of potential next steps:

- Purchasing additional licenses to broaden the user base among partner programs. This is in addition to the original 35 licenses that have been purchased.
- Assessing/evaluating potential integration with Arkansas Economic Development Commission employer needs assessment data.
- Assessing and evaluating potential opportunities for integration with Arkansas Job Link data.
- Assessing and evaluating the utilization of an external community portal feature within the system that could provide capabilities to interface with employers.
- Evaluating whether to continue administrative support with the Salesforce vendor (Coastal Cloud) under a managed services agreement over the next year.

#### E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Core and non-core programs have strong partnerships with the State’s two- and four-year institutions of higher education, especially at the community college level. Several Arkansas Workforce Centers are located on community college campuses, which enable a streamline process to move jobseekers into needed training or resources to upgrade their skills on the campus. Community colleges are at the forefront of workforce development in Arkansas and have strong connections with local employers, which enable core and non-core programs such as the WIOA Title I Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker programs, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and the TANF program to connect their customers to training that leads to occupations that are in-demand.

The TANF program funds the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative that provides funding to the State’s community colleges to provide post-secondary training to low-income custodial parents that are TANF eligible. This program provides supports to eligible parents to begin training in a career pathway that will enable them to move up the ladder of success in their chosen field.

Service delivery systems for adult education programs are funded through a variety of local administrative entities, including public school systems, colleges, literacy councils, and one correctional institution to name a few. In fact, fifty percent of administrative units for adult education fall under the administration of community colleges. Many local adult education programs work directly with colleges in supporting summer transition bridge programs to college. Others assist in helping students increase their basic academic skills in order to reduce the need for remediation.

The Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS-AES) has partnered with the Arkansas Community Colleges to offer Accelerating Opportunity to four community colleges

and adult education programs in the state. Accelerating Opportunity (AO) is a community college initiative of Jobs for the Future whose goal is to ensure that more workers have the skills needed to earn credentials that lead to family-sustaining careers. The AO programs are transitioning to focus more on Integrated and Education training programs across the state. Both initiatives aim to change how Adult Basic Education is structured and delivered through a collaborative effort in which a basic skills instructor and technical college instructor provide concurrent and contextualized instruction for adults at various levels of education and skills. For the 2018-2019 program year, 343 participants were enrolled in AO and IETs combined. Program Directors continually evaluate these programs to ensure relevance to students and the local workforce needs.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) actively engages the State's education and training providers including two-year and four-year colleges and career and technical education schools as partners in the workforce development system to create job-driven education and training opportunities for individuals with disabilities. A large portion of the agency's budget is committed to support client enrollment in these types of trainings with a goal of client attainment of competitive integrated employment. ARS's VR counselors and assistive technology staff routinely engage education and training personnel regarding needed accommodations necessary for clients to successfully complete training programs. Agency staff also participate in Ark-AHEAD, the Arkansas affiliate of the Association of Higher Education and Disability.

Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has a partnership which provides college preparatory classes to blind and low vision students utilizing the campus of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. DSB has arranged for college and technical school tours for blind and low vision students, so that the students and the institutions of higher education can interact and discuss career goals prior to applying for admission.

#### F. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

The core and non-core partners have a strong partnership with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Arkansas Community Colleges, Registered Apprenticeship, and the Arkansas Board of Private Career Education, the licensing board for private education in Arkansas. This partnership will be nurtured under the implementation of this plan and encourage training providers from both public and private institutions to engage with the State's workforce development system and provide feedback for continuous improvement.

For example, one adult education provider partners with the Electrical Apprenticeship program to provide basic skills instruction primarily in math. Apprentices entering the electrical trade are required to be licensed by the Arkansas Department of Labor, Board of Electrical Examiners. This is a four-year program consisting of 640 hours of classroom instruction coinciding with 8,000 hours of on-the-job training. When a student completes the program, he or she will be granted a "release to test" and can submit an application to sit for the journeyman electrician's exam. The adult education classes are offered through partnership with the Arkansas Construction Education Foundation. In 2018-19, the adult education program served 29 students for 1,669 hours (in basic math as part of the electrical program).

Through partnership with the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, the State has collected necessary data to add all Registered Apprenticeship programs desiring such to the list of approved eligible training providers. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has and will continue to work with local workforce development boards to educate training providers on the

process to become eligible training providers in an effort to increase the number of providers and customer choice in training.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has partnered with the Arkansas Research Center and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education in an effort to compile required performance data for the continued eligibility of training providers in an effort to offset the administrative burden to the provider. The State anticipates that this assistance will enable many eligible training providers to remain on the list of approved training providers that otherwise would have dropped off due to the significant reporting requirements under WIOA.

#### G. LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

Education is the key to successfully implement career pathways programs across the state. The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) federal funds support the advancement of individuals into postsecondary education and work. The grants to eligible providers require states to consider “whether the eligible provider’s activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship” (Section 231(e) (8)). The integration of literacy instruction and occupational skills training is an allowable activity that states can use leadership and federal funds to support.

AEFLA funds may be used to support the portion of an Integrated Education and Training (IET) or career pathways program that provides instruction in reading, writing, mathematics, or English proficiency that is below the postsecondary level. This instruction in basic literacy skills and the English language should be contextualized to support the occupational skills portion of the program. Curriculum for a career pathways program should adequately address basic literacy skills, workforce preparation and the occupational competencies needed for the participant to complete the program successfully. AEFLA funds may be used to plan, develop, and deliver the portions of the curriculum that address basic literacy skills and appropriate workforce preparation.

As part of the state’s Accelerating Opportunity partnership with the Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC), adult education was able to use funds to support instruction, curriculum and development, and training; whereas, the ACC was able to use funds to pay the tuition and fees for students without a high school diploma. Both enrolled college students in a career pathway and participating adult students were able to benefit from having a contextualized and basic skills instructor co-teaching together. For Integrated Education and Training programs, similar support and partnerships are being developed and planned.

Pre-employment transition and transition services are key components of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services’ system of service delivery. Pre-employment transition services help students determine career interests while transition services assist students in transitioning from secondary education into postsecondary education and employment. Roles and responsibilities for providing these types of services are outlined in agreements between the agency and involved education agencies. The individualized plan for employment (IPE) is the foundation for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. It is intended to outline shared responsibility between the agency, the client, and other involved parties. The IPE addresses the specific client vocational goal as well as services (including education and training) needed to achieve the goal, and outlines who is responsible for providing the service and how it will be paid.

DSB researches and applies all federal and state comparable services and similar benefits available for educational access at all institutions of higher education, career, community college, and area career and technical schools. Once this is done, DSB provides financial support to the participants individually, based on their goals and needs. We work in conjunction with Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative to identify training programs that lead to real world employment experiences to match education with obtaining employment.

Through the implementation of a co-enrollment policy for core and non-core programs, opportunities for braided funding will be realized that will essentially “stretch” the funding available through the programs. This is possible by each program contributing what they can instead of one program picking up the entire cost of training and supportive services. Non-core programs will be incorporated into this customer flow and co-enrollment process.

Furthermore, the Arkansas Community Colleges, the association representing all two-year colleges in the State, has been a vital partner in delivering services through several discretionary grants including the Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathway Initiative, the Arkansas Sector Partnership, and the Arkansas Job Driven National Emergency Grant. Their leadership and partnership has assisted the State in better connecting the workforce development center system with the State’s two-year college system.

#### H. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

A master plan for improving Arkansas higher education attainment was presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board on October 30, 2015. The 2015-2020 five year planning cycle adopted in this plan is a critical component in the long-term objective to reach the 2025 goal of a 60 percent post-secondary attainment rate in Arkansas, increasing from the current estimate of 43.4 percent. By 2020, the plan is to reduce the educational attainment gap in Arkansas by increasing the number of postsecondary credentials by 50 percent over the 2013-2014 academic year levels; increasing the number of certificates awarded to 19,200; associate’s degrees to 12,700; and bachelor’s degrees to 19,900.

Title I of WIOA allows funds to be provided for adults and dislocated workers who meet WIOA Title I eligibility requirements for occupational skills training, on-the-job training, programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, skills upgrading and retraining, entrepreneurial training, job-readiness training, adult education and literacy activities described in section 134(3) (D) of WIOA. ADCE-AED is collaborating with Title I programs to combine resources, reduce duplication of services, and provide support to Arkansans.

During the state’s administrators’ meeting the program manager from the Office of Apprenticeships does a workshop session on apprenticeship programs across the state and how adult education can be a partner in the process. Apprentices who may need additional academic assistance are often referred to adult education. One of the challenges is the availability of evening classes offered in the adult education centers to accommodate working adults. One of the ways the state is combatting this issue is by increasing the number of distance learning classes being offered to provide around the clock access.

The Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC), adult education’s professional development center, have provided consultation and training for local programs to establish career pathways and Integrated Education Training programs that align with local workforce needs. The AALRC hired consultants, Michelle Carson and Libby Livings-Eassa, to provide over 40 hours of professional development training on Career Pathways to adult education directors, staff, and partners. In addition, trainings on establishing Integrated Education Training

programs and developing contextualized instruction have been provided for local program directors and instructors. Adult education directors are aware that career pathways is now one of the 13 considerations that must be met in order to receive federal funds; “whether the eligible provider’s activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community- based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways Section 231(e) (8)).

Local adult education providers have been working with community colleges, apprenticeship programs, Title I programs, and health care providers to offer industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, that are portable and stackable. Currently, some providers have offered National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) certifications, Certified Nursing Assistant credentials, Industrial Safety, OSHA training, and Welding to name a few. Other core partners such as Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, TANF, DHS, and DWS assist by either paying for some of these classes and certifications or offering support services such as transportation and childcare.

ARS recognizes the importance of increasing access to industry recognized credentials for its clients. Discussion of the need for credential attainment is a consideration in the development of a client’s individualized plan for employment. ARS continues to work to realign resources for training and education as evidenced by the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI), ARS’ internal training unit, which focuses on providing training programs that result in industry recognized credentials. With the transition of ACTI to a nonresidential program, consideration is given to partnering with local community rehabilitation programs to replicate credentialed programs in other areas across the state. Plans also include ACTI taking a lead role in ARS’s utilization of pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship training for clients.

There are plans for continued expansion of the use of pre-apprenticeship for VR clients in Arkansas. In the second quarter of FFY 2018, 100 students have registered for pre-apprenticeship training.

DSB has traditionally paid tuition for vocational and postsecondary education that will lead to employment. DSB will increase its use of Registered Apprenticeship training opportunities for its consumers and align its resources for training and education resulting in industry-recognized postsecondary credentials.

It is imperative for staff from core and non-core programs to increase engagement with training providers and programs that lead to postsecondary credentials engage to ensure that they apply and are accepted onto the Eligible Training Provider List.

#### I. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The State recognizes that workforce development cannot be performed in a vacuum without the connection to economic development and the priorities established by both state and local economic development entities. To ensure that economic development strategies are at the forefront of state, regional, and local planning, representatives of economic development organizations are on the state and local boards. Furthermore, economic development representatives are members of the WIOA Roundtable, which is the interagency WIOA planning team. Seven of the ten local workforce development boards have administrative and fiscal entities that are also local economic development organizations.

This close connection ensures that local planning is on target with local economic development strategies. Furthermore, in 2015, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education implemented the Workforce Investment Initiative, which provided funding for regional workforce development planning. To qualify and apply for funding, applicants had to have a partnership that included the support of the local workforce development board, educational entities, and that planning was based on local economic development strategies.

## B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

### Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

Arkansas JobLink (AJL) is the state's integrated web-based workforce development management information system (MIS) used by the state and local areas to share and manage participant data between the Wagner-Peyser program, the Trade Adjustment Assistance program and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program. AJL provides jobseekers, employers, and workforce development professionals with tremendous flexibility and capacity for accessing, tracking, and reporting services: self-directed, staff-facilitated, staff-assisted, and case management.

All staff has access to and can view all services provided to clients regardless of individual program funding. This approach allows funding streams (regardless of specific target group) to consider the "complete package" of services provided or made available to the client reducing duplication of effort and maximizing outcomes. It also facilitates a single process to extract required data for the generation and submission of performance or demographic client details as required by current mandates. In short AJL provides all workforce partners with a "whole person view" of the services available, or provided to, each client or group.

Arkansas Job Link provides:

- One-stop case management, data collection and reporting
- A single-job placement system, which is used by all partner agencies
- Program management and reporting for WIA adult, dislocated worker, youth programs, labor exchange, and Trade Adjustment Assistance
- A staff assisted and a self-service job match system for jobseekers and employers
- An eligibility determination process that leads staff to identify programs for which the individual might be eligible
- Because of this program, jobseekers and business clients receive significant benefits affecting opportunity and success. Impacts are:
  - Entry to the system from multiple locations, including home or office
  - Decreased number of times the client has to provide basic information
  - Access to additional useful information (career preparation, labor market, disabilities resources, support services, etc.)
  - Better-prepared and more timely referrals between partner agencies
  - Jobseeker access to job listings and employer access to resumes.

Arkansas has taken a lead in the development of a direct electronic interface between our AJL and Unemployment Insurance (UI) systems. Through this interface we ensure that all UI



claimants are registered for work and eliminates repetitive information gathering from UI claimants. We have also implemented a proactive approach to Reemployment Services (RES) and Reemployment and Eligibility Assessments (REA) to claimants with the goal of reducing the average length of time a client is out of work. This effort would have been exponentially more difficult if we were not dealing with an integrated service delivery system. Through the use of electronic wage matching, records are regularly updated with information received from the State and other sources to identify those who have obtained employment and calculate average earnings.

Each quarter, quarterly wage record information is loaded into AJL to measure the progress on State and local common performance measures. The quarterly wage information includes wages paid to an individual, the social security account number, the name of the individual, and the Federal employer identification number of the employer paying the wages to the individual. State wage records are available to other member states through the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) on a quarterly basis. Likewise, Arkansas is able to track participants that work or move outside of Arkansas for performance measurement purposes through WRIS wage records from member states.

All local WIOA Title I service providers have access to the state wage record information for the purpose of measuring local common performance measures. AJL can be found at <https://www.arjoblink.arkansas.gov>.

Discover Arkansas Labor Market Information Portal Arkansas Labor Market Information (LMI) is posted online using the Discover Arkansas web portal located at [www.discoverarkansas.net](http://www.discoverarkansas.net) and is available to the general public.

### Adult Education Section

The Adult Education Section Division utilizes the Literacy, Adult and Community Education System (LACES) for reporting purposes. All programs receiving adult education federal and state funds from the Adult Education Section must report student data for both reportable individuals and participants in LACES, which is an online accessible system that allows the state and local programs to complete reports for the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). Required information includes demographic measures, participation measures, and follow-up measures. Approved users can access the website at <https://laces.literacypro.com/laces/>.

The Adult Education Section implemented LACES for the 2017-18 program year. Previously, the state used the Adult Education Reporting Information System (AERIS) from the 2005 PY through the 2016 PY.

Data collected on each adult student include demographic data (age, gender, ethnicity), barriers to employment, county residence, entering educational functioning levels as defined by the National Reporting System (NRS), progression through educational functioning levels, employment status at entry, follow-up achievements, test scores, class enrollment, and daily attendance. Data collected on each instructor/tutor include personal data, title, certification, classes, and attendance for each class. Through the data collected above, federal, state, and local reports are generated using any and/or all of the data. In addition, through a memorandum of understanding between the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and the Division of Workforce Services, follow-up measures for exited participants that enter post-secondary education or gain employment can be tracked.

All adults who receive services from adult education and literacy programs are considered reportable individuals. Adults who have received services; and have a completed an Intake Form, should be entered into LACES whether an assessment has been administered. Students who have 12 or more contact hours within a program year (July 1 to June 30) are considered participants by the National Reporting System (NRS) of the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). Students should be pre-tested before they have acquired 12 instruction contact hours.

All student data must be entered into LACES by the 15th of each month for the previous month's data. All data must be reviewed by the 22nd of each month for the previous month's data. This includes post-test scores in which students do not show educational gains. Students with both a pretest and post-test will be recorded in NRS Table 4B, which is a required federal table. In addition, all assessment scores in the system should be dated on the exact date the test was given. Test documentation must be available in the students' files and is subject to monitoring during site visits and program reviews.

Each program is required to maintain and follow a policy and procedure for data entry that includes checks and balances for data collection steps, personnel responsible for entering data, and personnel who checks and verifies data. The process is the same for all adult education providers regardless of location. Verification of data is checked through desk audits and on-site visits by state program advisors.

According to Assurance 13 of the Adult Education Section Assurances, which is signed at the time of the adult education grant award, all programs that receive adult education funds agree to submit student data according to schedules set by the Adult Education Section. If programs are missing data in LACES, or have data with errors or deviations, they will be notified by a program advisor and will be required to correct the problem within one month. According to Assurance 33, the Adult Education Section may reduce funding or terminate agreements in part or whole if it has been determined that a program has failed to comply with the assurances.

### Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

The Arkansas Rehabilitation Services system of record for Vocational Rehabilitation is System 7™ is a highly configurable and intuitive case management platform. System 7™ has built-in design-for-configurability using an XML and table-driven approach. Custom applications can be delivered quickly and affordably as well as interface with multiple outside sources. With HTTPS and SSL security, data will remain secure in transit and at rest. System 7™ is web-based, does not require installation on individual user workstations, and can be used anywhere there is an Internet connection. Its use of switch settings and role-based security delivers a secure and flexible solution. System 7™'s Report Control Center and table-driven approach also allows custom data queries and easy ad-hoc reporting. Users can easily view and collect data in real time.

System 7™ offers an intuitive Graphical User Interface (GUI) and contains an existing VR form set for use in implementing the case management functionality. Interactive electronic forms that mirror an agency's paper forms can be used to enter data directly into the system, eliminating time wasted on transcription from paper into traditional information management systems. In addition to providing a form set, another desirable feature of System 7™ is that tools are included that allows the VR agency to maintain and create their own reports and letters. Also, System 7™ supports digital signatures using multiple models of electronic signature pads. In addition, it allows for centralized storage of scanned documents, as well as functionality that allows forms and notes to be sent to other users securely.

Information within System 7™ is separated into modules, each of which is integral to and enhances the functionality of the system as a whole. The case management module tracks consumer information, while the vendor and services module allows participating vendors to be added to the application and linked to the services they offer. An employment module tracks employers and job opportunities. The System 7™ voucher module provides a means for preparing, reviewing, and controlling, and submitting fiscal information to any third party fiscal system. Budget accounts are created and maintained within System 7™. Authorizations and invoices are used to track which vendors provided which services to a consumer or group of consumers.

#### Division of Services for the Blind

The Division of Services for the Blind's (DSB) case management system is known as AWARE from Alliance Enterprises, Inc. This case-management system provides records management software for Vocational Rehabilitation. It provides systems to monitor case progression, program finances, and overall agency performance. It also contains a job bank of employers who have hired blind and visually impaired clients of DSB.

DSB operates as a true web-based system, meaning it has the accessibility of Internet technology coupled with security to provide access to case information on a need-to-know basis. Data can be accessed, collected, and reported on the vocational rehabilitation program for the blind from any workstation within the state's network, or if allowed by agency policy with a secure connection from outside the state network. Staff who works with participants at schools, job sites or other facilities can "check out" a case(s) and use perform case work in the field. Upon returning to the office, staff checks the case back into the central system.

DSB is also pursuing Data Sharing Agreements with the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and has an agreement with the Arkansas Research Center through the Department of Health and Human Services in order to collect and report on employment outcomes.

#### Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Arkansas Workforce Integrated Networks System (ARWINS) ARWINS is an information services platform conceived and developed by the Arkansas TANF Digital Transformation Office to support job training and other services for TANF families. With appropriate extensions, this IT system aligns perfectly with the desired outcomes across many unique welfare and workforce development programs like SNAP, Medicaid and WIOA. Just as important, ARWINS is affordable with the ability to be supported by in-house IT staff. It is built using open source software, specifically Ruby on Rails, and it follows the service standards and conventions promoted by the Whitehall Project, (for the UK Government) U.S. Department of Labor, Instagram and Bloomberg among others. Thus, the software, as open source, has been used, tested, and proven by a variety of other adopters, allowing new projects to benefit from those past experiences allows for wide-spread usage at an affordable cost.

ARWINS is designed for digital use. It is future oriented and geared toward today's end users. In an effort to match the current and future needs of a variety of users, ARWINS is compatible with laptops and mobile devices—any device size or type, enabling usage anytime, anywhere, at the full convenience of the end user.

Because ARWINS was initially developed for managing and reporting TANF programs, it has a wide array of configurable assessments and supports. It is designed to analyze information provided to support staff and consumers in overcoming barriers that prevent long term sustainable employment. It was also designed in a format that could be modified to enable

individuals, including vulnerable populations, to use the system as a tool to support their own growth and development, empowering them to be engaged in their own success!

ARWINS is a web-based suite of tools and resources that provides:

Jobseekers:

- A workforce system registration module that integrates structured work readiness assessments to identify employment barriers across a range of factors, such as:
  - - Employment History
    - Education
    - Legal Issues
    - Physical and mental health problems
    - Substance Abuse
    - Transportation
    - Child Care
- Ability to develop a consumer and family-centric career pathway plan that incorporates an employment preparation plan. This plan includes a wrap-around barrier reduction plan that consists of temporary supportive services offered across traditional workforce (core WIOA partners) and welfare reform (TANF) programs as well as social programs like SNAP, Child Care, and Medical Services.

Employers and Providers:

- A workforce system registration module that gives access to a one-stop workforce services experience
- Insight and access to customized labor market information
- Expanded visibility to potential traditional and non-traditional jobseeker candidate databases
- Program administrators and operating partners
- Screening, intake, eligibility determination and benefits issuance (EBT)
- Initial and ongoing case management
- Single view of a consumer where appropriate and feasible vis-à-vis a single individual view that intersects provision of contextual and behavioral consumer data
- Consumer information can be recorded once and shared across multiple programs for integrated work readiness assessment, employment planning, cross-program eligibility determination, and aligning provider services, referrals, and invoicing, with case management tracking.
- An outreach and communication platform that integrates with social media channels to organize events, partnering organizations and entities, as well as active constituent relationship management

- The system looks for and alerts users to indicators of events that need attention prior to, rather than following, an event that may be avoided when identified in time. For example, a TANF case manager may become aware that a participant is nearing sanction early enough to prevent that action.

- Program Performance - Reporting, Fraud, Overpayments and Collections, Quality Assurance

ARWINS tracks payments to education, training and service providers across all programs. Integrated processing and tracking allows partners to share resources for payments, consolidate payment requests, and track payments across multiple programs for each consumer across the entire participant budget. ARWINS tracks and identifies total costs of benefits provided to any consumer. This information can be used to determine total costs per consumer participating in a range of activities as well as provides data on which development paths are most effective and cost efficient enabling outcome and expenditure planning and reporting.

ARWINS also manages the privacy and security that is needed, and within this constraint, allows multiple professionals to record and review appropriate information about the consumers they serve. Security can be configured in a way that allows each participant's service team, whether colocated or not, to stay current on what is being addressed, how, the expected outcomes, and actual results for that participant. This provides each team member, which may include a variety of professionals from different partnering organizations or businesses, a view of the universe of that participant, including needs, barriers, progress, and goals. ARWINS intends to allow communities to configure security in a way that supports the needs of the teams while protecting the privacy of the individual.

The Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) supports the development of, or enhancements to, longitudinal administrative databases that integrate workforce data education data. WDQI also emphasizes promoting improvements and the level of quality of these systems, in addition to increasing the accessibility of performance data, including data reported by employment services and training providers. Education data is being collected under the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education to which the WDQI is a parallel effort. The SLDS emphasizes the collection of workforce data and the WDQI was created, in part, to accompany the work being done on the education side to gather longitudinal data. WDQI is a collaborative partnership at the Federal level between the Departments of Labor and of Education. The long-term WDQI and Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems goal for States is to use their longitudinal data systems to follow individuals through school and into and through their work life. WDQI grant recipients are expected to demonstrate similarly established partnerships between state workforce and educational agencies. High quality and consistent data that is available from service providers about services offered, and how well their customers benefited as they enter or re-enter the labor market, are integral to informed consumer choices. In Arkansas, the WDQI is administered by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services through partnership with the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Department of Human Services, Office of Skills Development and the Arkansas Research Center.

Data made available through the WDQI has been utilized to produce performance outcomes for various workforce development programs and to produce the baseline performance data for the WIOA core performance goals.

A cross agency team has been developed to review the existing data systems and to develop a plan for integrating the data available through these systems. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has been identified as the lead state agency and will be responsible for

working with the Arkansas Department of Information Systems to develop an Information Technology Plan for implementation.

Arkansas Act 912 of 2017 established a Chief Data Officer and Chief Privacy Officer within the Arkansas Department of Information Systems. This Act supports the state's vision of sharing data across state agencies, while ensuring that all data will be properly protected under the joint leadership of the Chief Privacy Officer, Chief Security Officer, and Chief Data Officer.

It is the hope of the Governor that Arkansas will become the first state in this nation to achieve statewide data sharing and transparency capability.

#### Trade Adjustment Act Program

In addition to paying a portion of the overhead and office expenses of the locations where TAA staff are located the TAA program also provides significant support for the Arkansas Job Link (AJL) system. AJL is our integrated intake, case management, and reporting system and is a part of the America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA).

#### 1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF–

##### Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

Arkansas JobLink (AJL) is the state's integrated web-based workforce development management information system (MIS) used by the state and local areas to share and manage participant data between the Wagner-Peyser program, the Trade Adjustment Assistance program and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program. AJL provides jobseekers, employers, and workforce development professionals with tremendous flexibility and capacity for accessing, tracking, and reporting services: self-directed, staff-facilitated, staff-assisted, and case management.

All staff has access to and can view all services provided to clients regardless of individual program funding. This approach allows funding streams (regardless of specific target group) to consider the "complete package" of services provided or made available to the client reducing duplication of effort and maximizing outcomes. It also facilitates a single process to extract required data for the generation and submission of performance or demographic client details as required by current mandates. In short AJL provides all workforce partners with a "whole person view" of the services available, or provided to, each client or group.

Arkansas Job Link provides:

- One-stop case management, data collection and reporting
  - A single-job placement system, which is used by all partner agencies
  - Program management and reporting for WIA adult, dislocated worker, youth programs, labor exchange, and Trade Adjustment Assistance
  - A staff assisted and a self-service job match system for jobseekers and employers
    - An eligibility determination process that leads staff to identify programs for which the individual might be eligible

- Because of this program, jobseekers and business clients receive significant benefits affecting opportunity and success. Impacts are:
- Entry to the system from multiple locations, including home or office
- Decreased number of times the client has to provide basic information
- Access to additional useful information (career preparation, labor market, disabilities resources, support services, etc.)
- Better-prepared and more timely referrals between partner agencies
- Jobseeker access to job listings and employer access to resumes.

Arkansas has taken a lead in the development of a direct electronic interface between our AJL and Unemployment Insurance (UI) systems. Through this interface we ensure that all UI claimants are registered for work and eliminates repetitive information gathering from UI claimants. We have also implemented a proactive approach to Reemployment Services (RES) and Reemployment and Eligibility Assessments (REA) to claimants with the goal of reducing the average length of time a client is out of work. This effort would have been exponentially more difficult if we were not dealing with an integrated service delivery system. Through the use of electronic wage matching, records are regularly updated with information received from the State and other sources to identify those who have obtained employment and calculate average earnings.

Each quarter, quarterly wage record information is loaded into AJL to measure the progress on State and local common performance measures. The quarterly wage information includes wages paid to an individual, the social security account number, the name of the individual, and the Federal employer identification number of the employer paying the wages to the individual. State wage records are available to other member states through the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) on a quarterly basis. Likewise, Arkansas is able to track participants that work or move outside of Arkansas for performance measurement purposes through WRIS wage records from member states.

All local WIOA Title I service providers have access to the state wage record information for the purpose of measuring local common performance measures. AJL can be found at <https://www.arjoblink.arkansas.gov>.

Discover Arkansas Labor Market Information Portal Arkansas Labor Market Information (LMI) is posted online using the Discover Arkansas web portal located at [www.discoverarkansas.net](http://www.discoverarkansas.net) and is available to the general public.

### Adult Education Section

The Adult Education Section Division utilizes the Literacy, Adult and Community Education System (LACES) for reporting purposes. All programs receiving adult education federal and state funds from the Adult Education Section must report student data for both reportable individuals and participants in LACES, which is an online accessible system that allows the state

and local programs to complete reports for the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). Required information includes demographic measures, participation measures, and follow-up measures. Approved users can access the website at <https://laces.literacypro.com/laces/>.

The Adult Education Section implemented LACES for the 2017-18 program year. Previously, the state used the Adult Education Reporting Information System (AERIS) from the 2005 PY through the 2016 PY.

Data collected on each adult student include demographic data (age, gender, ethnicity), barriers to employment, county residence, entering educational functioning levels as defined by the National Reporting System (NRS), progression through educational functioning levels, employment status at entry, follow-up achievements, test scores, class enrollment, and daily attendance. Data collected on each instructor/tutor include personal data, title, certification, classes, and attendance for each class. Through the data collected above, federal, state, and local reports are generated using any and/or all of the data. In addition, through a memorandum of understanding between the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and the Division of Workforce Services, follow-up measures for exited participants that enter post-secondary education or gain employment can be tracked.

All adults who receive services from adult education and literacy programs are considered reportable individuals. Adults who have received services; and have a completed an Intake Form, should be entered into LACES whether an assessment has been administered. Students who have 12 or more contact hours within a program year (July 1 to June 30) are considered participants by the National Reporting System (NRS) of the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). Students should be pre-tested before they have acquired 12 instruction contact hours.

All student data must be entered into LACES by the 15th of each month for the previous month's data. All data must be reviewed by the 22nd of each month for the previous month's data. This includes post-test scores in which students do not show educational gains. Students with both a pretest and post-test will be recorded in NRS Table 4B, which is a required federal table. In addition, all assessment scores in the system should be dated on the exact date the test was given. Test documentation must be available in the students' files and is subject to monitoring during site visits and program reviews.

Each program is required to maintain and follow a policy and procedure for data entry that includes checks and balances for data collection steps, personnel responsible for entering data, and personnel who checks and verifies data. The process is the same for all adult education providers regardless of location. Verification of data is checked through desk audits and on-site visits by state program advisors.

According to Assurance 13 of the Adult Education Section Assurances, which is signed at the time of the adult education grant award, all programs that receive adult education funds agree to submit student data according to schedules set by the Adult Education Section. If programs are missing data in LACES, or have data with errors or deviations, they will be notified by a program advisor and will be required to correct the problem within one month. According to Assurance 33, the Adult Education Section may reduce funding or terminate agreements in part or whole if it has been determined that a program has failed to comply with the assurances.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services



The Arkansas Rehabilitation Services system of record for Vocational Rehabilitation is System 7™. System 7™ is a highly configurable and intuitive case management platform. System 7™ has built-in design-for-configurability using an XML and table-driven approach. Custom applications can be delivered quickly and affordably as well as interface with multiple outside sources. With HTTPS and SSL security, data will remain secure in transit and at rest. System 7™ is web-based, does not require installation on individual user workstations, and can be used anywhere there is an Internet connection. Its use of switch settings and role-based security delivers a secure and flexible solution. System 7™'s Report Control Center and table-driven approach also allows custom data queries and easy ad-hoc reporting. Users can easily view and collect data in real time.

System 7™ offers an intuitive Graphical User Interface (GUI) and contains an existing VR form set for use in implementing the case management functionality. Interactive electronic forms that mirror an agency's paper forms can be used to enter data directly into the system, eliminating time wasted on transcription from paper into traditional information management systems. In addition to providing a form set, another desirable feature of System 7™ is that tools are included that allows the VR agency to maintain and create their own reports and letters. Also, System 7™ supports digital signatures using multiple models of electronic signature pads. In addition, it allows for centralized storage of scanned documents, as well as functionality that allows forms and notes to be sent to other users securely.

Information within System 7™ is separated into modules, each of which is integral to and enhances the functionality of the system as a whole. The case management module tracks consumer information, while the vendor and services module allows participating vendors to be added to the application and linked to the services they offer. An employment module tracks employers and job opportunities. The System 7™ voucher module provides a means for preparing, reviewing, and controlling, and submitting fiscal information to any third party fiscal system. Budget accounts are created and maintained within System 7™. Authorizations and invoices are used to track which vendors provided which services to a consumer or group of consumers.

#### Division of Services for the Blind

The Division of Services for the Blind's (DSB) case management system is known as AWARE from Alliance Enterprises, Inc. This case-management system provides records management software for Vocational Rehabilitation. It provides systems to monitor case progression, program finances, and overall agency performance. It also contains a job bank of employers who have hired blind and visually impaired clients of DSB.

DSB operates as a true web-based system, meaning it has the accessibility of Internet technology coupled with security to provide access to case information on a need-to-know basis. Data can be accessed, collected, and reported on the vocational rehabilitation program for the blind from any workstation within the state's network, or if allowed by agency policy with a secure connection from outside the state network. Staff who works with participants at schools, job sites or other facilities can "check out" a case(s) and use perform case work in the field. Upon returning to the office, staff checks the case back into the central system.

DSB is also pursuing Data Sharing Agreements with the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and has an agreement with the Arkansas Research Center through the Department of Health and Human Services in order to collect and report on employment outcomes.

#### Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Arkansas Workforce Integrated Networks System (ARWINS) ARWINS is an information services platform conceived and developed by the Arkansas TANF Digital Transformation Office to support job training and other services for TANF families. With appropriate extensions, this IT system aligns perfectly with the desired outcomes across many unique welfare and workforce development programs like SNAP, Medicaid and WIOA. Just as important, ARWINS is affordable with the ability to be supported by in-house IT staff. It is built using open source software, specifically Ruby on Rails, and it follows the service standards and conventions promoted by the Whitehall Project, (for the UK Government) U.S. Department of Labor, Instagram and Bloomberg among others. Thus, the software, as open source, has been used, tested, and proven by a variety of other adopters, allowing new projects to benefit from those past experiences allows for wide-spread usage at an affordable cost.

ARWINS is designed for digital use. It is future oriented and geared toward today's end users. In an effort to match the current and future needs of a variety of users, ARWINS is compatible with laptops and mobile devices—any device size or type, enabling usage anytime, anywhere, at the full convenience of the end user.

Because ARWINS was initially developed for managing and reporting TANF programs, it has a wide array of configurable assessments and supports. It is designed to analyze information provided to support staff and consumers in overcoming barriers that prevent long term sustainable employment. It was also designed in a format that could be modified to enable individuals, including vulnerable populations, to use the system as a tool to support their own growth and development, empowering them to be engaged in their own success!

ARWINS is a web-based suite of tools and resources that provides:

Jobseekers:

- A workforce system registration module that integrates structured work readiness assessments to identify employment barriers across a range of factors, such as:

- - Employment History
  - Education
  - Legal Issues
  - Physical and mental health problems
  - Substance Abuse
  - Transportation
  - Child Care

- Ability to develop a consumer and family-centric career pathway plan that incorporates an employment preparation plan. This plan includes a wrap-around barrier reduction plan that consists of temporary supportive services offered across traditional workforce (core WIOA partners) and welfare reform (TANF) programs as well as social programs like SNAP, Child Care, and Medical Services.

Employers and Providers:

- A workforce system registration module that gives access to a one-stop workforce services experience
- Insight and access to customized labor market information
- Expanded visibility to potential traditional and non-traditional jobseeker candidate databases
- Program administrators and operating partners
- Screening, intake, eligibility determination and benefits issuance (EBT)
- Initial and ongoing case management
- Single view of a consumer where appropriate and feasible vis-à-vis a single individual view that intersects provision of contextual and behavioral consumer data
- Consumer information can be recorded once and shared across multiple programs for integrated work readiness assessment, employment planning, cross-program eligibility determination, and aligning provider services, referrals, and invoicing, with case management tracking.
- An outreach and communication platform that integrates with social media channels to organize events, partnering organizations and entities, as well as active constituent relationship management
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Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education to which the WDQI is a parallel effort. The SLDS emphasizes the collection of workforce data and the WDQI was created, in part, to accompany the work being done on the education side to gather longitudinal data. WDQI is a collaborative partnership at the Federal level between the Departments of Labor and of Education. The long-term WDQI and Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems goal for States is to use their longitudinal data systems to follow individuals through school and into and through their work life. WDQI grant recipients are expected to demonstrate similarly established partnerships between state workforce and educational agencies. High quality and consistent data that is available from service providers about services offered, and how well their customers benefited as they enter or re-enter the labor market, are integral to informed consumer choices. In Arkansas, the WDQI is administered by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services through partnership with the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Department of Human Services, Office of Skills Development and the Arkansas Research Center.

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It is the hope of the Governor that Arkansas will become the first state in this nation to achieve statewide data sharing and transparency capability.

#### Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) Program

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services utilizes AJL as a staff assisted and self—service tool for the Labor Exchange, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program beneficiaries and to assist employers when recruiting viable employment candidates.

SEE ABOVE

## **2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (E.G., CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM**

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and its Adult Education Section, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and Division of Services for the Blind began meeting to discuss the implication of the new legislation and begin necessary discussions for the successful implementation of the federal law in Arkansas.

In November 2014, representatives from each of these agencies formed a WIOA Roundtable that met monthly and soon were joined by additional representatives from Registered Apprenticeship, higher education, secondary education, two- and four-year educational institutions, Carl D. Perkins secondary and post-secondary programs, Career and Technical Education, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, human services, and elected officials to engage in discussions about integration of services provided by a multitude of service providers. This planning team established committees to focus on critical areas in WIOA implementation to include: finance, IT system integration, policy development, core performance measures, sector strategies, and the development of the state workforce development plan.

The WIOA Roundtable Policy Committee meets routinely and has engaged the use of work groups formed from staff members across all agencies to draft policies for consideration by the policy committee. Each agency has representation on the policy committee in order to coordinate and align activities. After the WIOA Roundtable Policy Committee has reviewed and approved the policy, it goes to the appropriate committee of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board for consideration and adoption. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services as staff support for the AWDB takes lead on posting policies for public comment and making WIOA Title I-B policies available for all staff to access on the WIOA page of the website [www.dws.arkansas.gov/wioa.htm](http://www.dws.arkansas.gov/wioa.htm).

In Fall 2017, the initial WIOA Title I-B Policy Manual was presented to and approved by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, which included the following:

#### **Co-Enrollment and Co-Funding- Policy Number: WIOA I-B- 2.7**

##### **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to describe the requirements and regulations concerning co-enrollment and/or co-funding of WIOA Title I-B participants with various WIOA Title I-B programs, with other WIOA programs, with Arkansas Job Center partners, and with other appropriate entities, in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA), the WIOA Final Rule, Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGLs) published by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor (ETA), and policies of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB).

##### **REFERENCE:**

WIOA § 134(b)(2)(A)(v)

20 CFR 680.230

20 CFR 680.350

20 CFR 681.430 - 440

TEGL 19-16

A.C.A. 15-4-3711(a)(10)(D)

##### **POLICY:**

Under WIOA I-B, participants may be eligible for youth, adult, and/or dislocated worker services. The participant may also be eligible for the services of other one-stop partners, as well as services for non-one-stop partners. WIOA I-B case managers must be informed about the services of all WIOA funding streams (including other titles and subtitles). Case managers must coordinate with other agencies as appropriate to provide the full array of services documented

as needed by the participant [WIOA § 134(b)(2)(A)(v); 20 CFR 680.230]. Co-enrollment (or dual-enrollment) and/or co-funding with other entities is encouraged in order to give participants the best array of services [TEGL 19-16].

### **Co-enrollment within WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs**

Individuals who meet the respective program and service eligibility requirements may participate in Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth programs concurrently. Local programs operators may determine the appropriate level and balance of services under the Youth and Adult/Dislocated Worker programs. This determination depends not only on the eligibility requirements of each program, but also on the services needed by each participant [TEGL 19-16].

Services available under each funding stream will depend on eligibility for services under that funding stream. Local program operators may determine the appropriate level and balance of services for each individual under each program. Local program operators must identify and track the funding streams that pay the costs of services and ensure no duplication of services [20 CFR 681.430]. However, if it is determined that only the Youth or the Adult/Dislocated Worker program array of services is appropriate for an individual aged 18 - 24, then the local program provider may enroll the participant in only one program [20 CFR 681.440].

### **Co-enrollment and Co-funding with Other Programs**

WIOA Title I-B program providers are encouraged to work with other Workforce Center partners and other entities to provide a full array of needed services to participants. Not only does this strategy provide more services, it provides more case management to the participant, thus providing greater probability for success.

WIOA funding for training is limited to participants who are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay the costs of their training or require assistance beyond that available under grant assistance from other sources to pay the costs of such training. WIOA Title I-B Service Providers must not only ensure that participants apply for Pell Grants and other appropriate grants, but they must also coordinate funding with other one-stop partners and other entities for which the participant is eligible [20 CFR 680.230]. In order to appropriately coordinate funding and co-enrollment, case managers must be trained in programs and eligibility requirements of other one-stop partners and other local and state entities providing services needed by their participants so they can leverage the funding of other sources to provide all services needed by WIOA Title I-B participants [A.C.A. 15-4-3711(a)(10)(D)]. DOL has established a goal of co-enrolling 50% of TAA participants in either WIOA Title I Adult or Dislocated Worker programs. Therefore, co-enrollment of TAA participants into the WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker or Adult program is strongly encouraged if the TAA participant meets eligibility requirements. The specific services provided to these participants will depend on the needs of the participant and funding availability in the local area. Some of these potential entities include, but are not limited to:

- - Career Pathways Initiative for custodial parents attending Arkansas two-year colleges
  - Single Parent Scholarship Funds for each county ([www.aspsf.org/scholarships](http://www.aspsf.org/scholarships))
  - Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and Division of Services for the Blind

- TEA / Work Pays
- TAA
- WIOA Title I-D Dislocated Worker Grants and other Discretionary Grants
- Veterans' Services
- State and institutional scholarships
- Department of Human Services
- Food Stamp Employment and Training Programs
- Arkansas Human Development Corporation (National Farmworker Jobs Program)
- American Indian Center of Arkansas
- Local housing authority
- Local homeless shelter(s)
- Local food banks and distribution centers
- Local provider of assistance with utilities
- Local provider of older worker services (Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965, 42 U.S.C. § 3056 et seq.)
- Community Service Block Grants
- Programs funded by the Second Chance Act
- Other Arkansas Job Center partners, as appropriate

WIOA Title 1-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participants should be referred to and co-enrolled (or co-funded) with these services and other available services as appropriate. Local areas should have policies and procedures in place to ensure that other funds are leveraged [A.C.A. 15-4-3711(a)(10)(D), 20 CFR 680.230(b)].

WIOA Title I-B Adult and Dislocated Worker funds may support adult education and literacy activities of the Adult Education Section, the Arkansas Literacy Council, and other programs providing adult education and literacy activities if the participant is also engaged in one of the following [20 CFR 680.350]:

- - Occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment
  - On-the-job training (OJT)
  - Incumbent worker training, as described in ADWS Policy No. WIOA I-B - 3.6 (Incumbent Worker Training)
  - Programs that combined workplace training and related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs
  - Training programs operated by the private sector

- Skill upgrading and retraining
- Entrepreneurial training

Local areas must ensure that services are not duplicated for individuals enrolled in multiple programs.

#### FUNDING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

ADWS developed a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) template that detailed the requirements for funding infrastructure costs. This MOU template stated that Boards, with the agreement of CEO's, must develop and enter into memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with statutorily required one-stop partners for operation and funding of a one-stop delivery system in the local area. The One-Stop Operating Budget and Infrastructure Funding Agreement, attachments to the MOU template, establish a financial plan, including terms and conditions, to fund the services and operating costs of the Local Area Arkansas Workforce Center network.

This MOU template included a Dispute Resolution Process that allows a one-stop partner to file appeals regarding infrastructure costs and the appeal results in a change to the one-stop partner's infrastructure cost contributions, the MOU must be updated to reflect the final one-stop partner infrastructure cost contributions.

During the 92nd General Assembly - Regular Session (2019), the Arkansas General Assembly consolidated the core WIOA programs (Titles I, II, III, IV) under the newly-created Department of Commerce.

State partners have been given technical assistance and guidance throughout the Infrastructure Funding Agreement negotiation process that focused on the various methods of allocating shared costs, distinguishing what costs are and are not required to be in the Memorandum of Understandings/ Infrastructure Funding Agreements among partner programs, and Title I has taken the lead in coordinating the Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivables following the quarterly reconciliation process to ensure that these standards are adhered to on the state-level. Although several basis of allocating infrastructure costs were discussed in each local area, the primary basis for allocation is square footage, which is used to allocate shared costs. Costs are allocated by square footage unless the costs can be directly assigned to a partner or program in accordance with the 2 CFR 200 guidelines that distinguish direct and indirect costs. Following these guidelines, all 10 Local Workforce Development Boards have entered MOUs with their local partners and have implemented cost sharing across the state with partner programs.

### 3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

#### A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services administers nine of the thirteen programs represented in this plan. The agency goal is to provide quality workforce services that support the development of a well-trained workforce that meets employer needs. The Division provides many services that support both jobseekers and employers and helps people succeed throughout their working lives. We support workers during times of unemployment, track and analyze labor market trends, and link businesses and jobseekers to a diverse range of employment services provided by the state's workforce system. Through DWS' local offices, the needs of employers and job-seeking individuals are facilitated by matching qualified workers with an employer's specific employment needs.



DWS avidly supports Arkansas's employer community and is cognizant of their needs. DWS offers many services to Arkansas jobseekers and residents including: referral to suitable employment opportunities; job training assistance to economically disadvantaged individuals and those dislocated due to business closings, layoffs, and natural disasters; case management for disabled veterans; assessment of an individual's needs and referral to supportive agencies and programs.

The agency director is appointed by the Governor and is a member of the Governor's Workforce Cabinet. The agency has approximately 1,000 employees and has eight divisions which include: Unemployment Insurance, Employment Assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Legal Services, Financial Management and Administrative Services, New Hire Registry and Career Readiness Certification, and Field Operations.

Below is a list of programs administered by the Division.

- - - Wagner-Peyser Employment Services
    - Local Veterans Employment Representatives
    - Disabled Veterans Outreach Program
    - WIOA Youth Program
    - WIOA Adult Program
    - WIOA Dislocated Worker Program
    - Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion
    - Trade Adjustment Assistance
    - Alien Labor Certification
    - Workforce Opportunity Tax Credit
    - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
    - Transitional Employment Assistance
    - Arkansas Work Pays Program
    - Labor Market Information
    - Unemployment Insurance
    - Trade Readjustment Allowance
    - New Hire Registry
    - Career Readiness Certification
    - Discretionary Grants

Note: Effective July 1, 2019, the Division added the Adult Education Section and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services under the Governor's Transformation.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services also serves as the Governor's Administrative Entity for WIOA Title I funding, provides staffing support for the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, provides technical assistance to local workforce development boards, and monitors their activities. The agency operates the above listed programs through a budget of just over \$1 billion annually and awards funding for WIOA Title services to ten local workforce development boards for delivery of services locally in addition to numerous sub grantees for delivery of services through the TANF program and discretionary grants awarded to the agency from multiple sources.

The Office of Skills Development (OSD) is under the authority and leadership of the Career Education and Workforce Development Board. The State Board is appointed by the Governor and is charged with the responsibility for overseeing and directing the work of OSD. The Director for the agency is appointed by the Governor. Their mission is to provide leadership and contribute resources to serve the diverse and changing career educational needs of Arkansas youth, adults, and persons with disabilities.

Please note that under the Governor's Transformation Plan, the yet to be appointed Secretary of Commerce will have transitional authority regarding the Boards and organizations falling under the Department of Commerce. This transitional authority may impact the staffing of the Career Education and Workforce Development Board.

Adult Education Section Division (AES) funds 36 local adult education programs and literacy councils and the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC), the adult education's professional development training center. The adult education programs are supported with \$5.2 million received under Title II of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act and \$19 million in state funding.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) is the General Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency in Arkansas. Consistent with Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, states must appoint a state director and establish a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in order to receive federal vocational rehabilitation funds.

In Arkansas, the ARS Commissioner is the state director of the vocational rehabilitation program. SRC members are Governor appointed. The ARS Commissioner and senior management provide leadership to the agency's major components including, Field Services, the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI), Access and Accommodations, and Business Engagement.

Field Services personnel provide access for clients in need of vocational rehabilitation services. Services provided fall in three primary categories including pre-employment transition, transition, and general vocational rehabilitation services. The VR counselor has primary responsibility for determining eligibility, individualized plan for employment development, case management, vocational rehabilitation counseling, and related job readiness services with a goal of assisting clients in obtaining or maintaining competitive integrated employment. ACTI, ARS' internal training unit, provides vocational training programs with a focus on industry recognized credentials as well as providing an array of supportive services. Access and Accommodations is organized to address a client's assistive technology needs at school and at work. The Business Engagement unit is ARS' primary link to employers providing information regarding services and supports available to businesses.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is Arkansas's largest state agency, with more than 7,500 employees working to ensure citizens are healthy, safe and enjoying a high quality of life. The agency's skilled and passionate staff cares for Arkansans of all ages. People needing support

will find at least one local DHS office in each of the state's 75 counties. Arkansans may apply for a vast array of services at their local county office as well as online. Services include ARKids First health insurance for children, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) and Medicaid. Through a blend of federal and state Medicaid funds, DHS pays for 64 percent of the babies born in Arkansas each year and for the care of 69 percent of the state's nursing home patients. Additionally, DHS protects children and the elderly who have been abused or neglected; finds adoptive homes for foster children; funds congregate and home-delivered meals for the elderly; regulates nursing homes and childcare facilities; supports high-quality early childhood education; treats and serves youth in the juvenile justice system; oversees services for blind Arkansans; runs residential facilities for people with developmental disabilities; manages the Arkansas State Hospital and Arkansas Health Center for those with acute behavioral health issues; and supports nonprofit, community and faith-based organizations that depend on volunteers to continue programs vital to our communities. The agency also works with a system of community mental health care centers to provide mental health services to nearly 74,000 people each year. In all, DHS serves more than 1.2 million Arkansans every year. To manage these services and programs efficiently, DHS has ten divisions and five support offices headquartered in Little Rock in addition to the 85 county offices.

Two of DHS' programs were represented in this plan including Vocational Rehabilitation Services provided through the Division of Services for the Blind and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training Program.

The Division of Services for the Blind is the designated State Agency to provide services for rehabilitation and social services to blind and severely visually impaired persons age 14 and above in Arkansas. The agency has a director appointed by the Governor, but federal regulations stipulate the vocational rehabilitation designated state unit must utilize a commissioner. The DSB Director and the senior leadership of DSB provide oversight and coordination within the constraints of state and federal laws to fulfill its mission through the following goals:

- Employment - To assist Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired to secure or maintain employment and consistent with their skills, abilities, and interests.
- Rehabilitation - To assist Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired to live as independently as possible through the development of skills, accommodations, or adaptations that are necessary to perform all activities of daily living.
- Prevention of Blindness - To assist in preventing blindness stabilizing vision, and, where possible, restoring vision.
- Field Services personnel provide the local level coordination and facilitation of all general vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with blind or visual impairment issues. This includes, but is not limited to, vocational rehabilitation counseling, vocational case management, eligibility determination, individual employment plan development, transition services, and job placement.
- Business and Technology personnel provide assistance to educate consumers to develop management and business ownership within the Vending Facility Program (VFP). The

Vending Facility Program Services are available to eligible blind persons who are interested in and have the necessary skills to manage snack bars

Beginning July 1, 2019, consistent with the Governor's Transformation Plan, all core partner programs will be in the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS). Please note that under the Governor's Transformation Plan, the yet to be appointed Secretary of Commerce will have transitional authority regarding Boards and Organizations falling under the newly-created Department of Commerce. This transitional authority may impact the titles of program administrators. Changes to all Organizational Charts will be provided once they are approved by the Secretary of Commerce or Governor.

## B. STATE BOARD

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board was created by Arkansas Act 907 of 2015 and serves as the policymaking and oversight body for the State's workforce development system. The Arkansas Workforce Development Board is a 32-member private sector led board. Of the 32 members, 17 members are private sector business leaders from various industries from throughout Arkansas. Also represented on the board are representatives from organized labor, Registered Apprenticeship, chief elected officials, community-based organizations, and the directors of the state agencies responsible for workforce services, career education, economic development, vocational rehabilitation, education, and higher education.

The membership roster for the Arkansas Workforce Development Board can be found online at <http://dws.arkansas.gov/workforce-innovation/> and includes the membership category of representation as well as their professional affiliation.

The board meets on a quarterly basis and has a standard agenda layout to ensure that all of the activities of the board are being reported consistently and that the Executive Committee is able to monitor those activities. The order of business includes:

- Roll call
- Action on the minutes of the preceding meeting(s)
- Report of the Chairperson
- Report of the staff director
- Report of the Executive Committee
- Report of the standing committees
- Report of any ad hoc committees
- Other specified agenda items
- Communications, petitions and miscellaneous
- Adjournment

## STATE BOARD MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board Membership Roster, as of January 1, 2020 is:

1.
  - a. Mr. Thomas Anderson (Chair) Business Representative

- b. Mr. Len Blaylock Business Representative
- c. Mr. Scott Bull (Vice-Chair) Business Representative
- d. Mr. Mike Rogers Business Representative
- e. Ms. Melissa Hanesworth Business Representative
- f. Dr. Julie Roberson Business Representative
- g. Mr. George Nunnally Business Representative
- h. Ms. Abby Houseworth Business Representative
- i. Mr. Randy Finegan Business Representative
- j. Ms. Rebecca Ives Business Representative
- k. Ms. Holley Little Business Representative
- l. Mr. Paul Riveria Business Representative
- m. Ms. Chanda Chacon Business Representative
- n. Mr. Robert Thorne Business Representative
- o. Mr. Jeff Griffin Business Representative
- p. Mr. Randy Henderson Business Representative
- q. Dr. Diana Wright Business Representative
- r. Mr. Kelley Sharp Labor & Apprenticeship
- s. Mr. Lindsay Brown Org. Labor
- t. Mr. Alan Hughes Organized Labor
- u. Ms. Karen Breashears Labor & Apprenticeship
- v. Mr. Brian Marsh Community-Based Org.
- w. Dr. Maria Markham Train. or Educ. of Eligible Youth
- x. Mr. Johnny Key Train. or Educ of Eligible Youth
- y. Dr. Trenia Miles State Agency Dirctor
- z. Dr. Charisse Childers State Agency Director
- aa. Mr. Alan McClain State Agency Director
- bb. Ms. Cassondra Williams-Stokes State Agency Director
- cc. Sec. Mike Preston Economic Development
- dd. James Sanders City Mayor
- ee. Brandon Ellison County Judge
- ff. **Asa Hutchinson Governor**

#### **i. Membership roster**

Provide a membership roster for the State Board, including members' organizational affiliations.

SEE ABOVE

## **ii. Board Activities**

Provide a description of the activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively.

Every new member is provided a thorough orientation that includes information on the following:

- Introduction to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- Introduction to the Arkansas Workforce System to include the purpose, guiding principles, employer-driven focus, importance of business relationships, and services to employers and jobseekers
- Information regarding the Arkansas Workforce Centers including the hallmarks of excellence, goal of workforce centers, accessing services, operational and functional requirements for a workforce center, partner programs, more detailed info on employer and jobseekers services, employment resources, assessments, job coaching, and building toward excellence
- Information on the workforce board including the board vision, mission, role of the board, strategic planning, using labor market information, oversight responsibilities, evaluation, innovation, collaboration, attracting and involving employers, and targeted industries in the State
- Information regarding how to be a successful board member including areas of responsibility, the appointment process, key characteristics of a successful workforce board member, networking, conflict of interest, Arkansas Freedom of Information Act, and board staff roles

Since its formation in June 2015, newly appointed and experienced members receive annual training regarding their roles and responsibility as a board member. Additionally, the full board and its Strategic Planning, Program and Performance Evaluation, and TANF Oversight Committees conduct quarterly meetings.

## **I. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER**

### **STATE BOARD MEMBERSHIP ROSTER**

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- cc. Sec. Mike Preston Economic Development
- dd. James Sanders City Mayor
- ee. Brandon Ellison County Judge
- ff. **Asa Hutchinson Governor**

**Note: Arkansas Act 907 of 2015 does not require the One Member of each Chamber of the State Legislature. In accordance with TEGL 27-14, Attachment II, Arkansas relied upon the (to the extent consistent with State Law) flexibility.**

## II. BOARD ACTIVITIES

Provide a description of the activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively.

Every new member is provided a thorough orientation that includes information on the following:

- Introduction to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- Introduction to the Arkansas Workforce System to include the purpose, guiding principles, employer-driven focus, importance of business relationships, and services to employers and jobseekers
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- Information on the workforce board including the board vision, mission, role of the board, strategic planning, using labor market information, oversight responsibilities, evaluation, innovation, collaboration, attracting and involving employers, and targeted industries in the State
- Information regarding how to be a successful board member including areas of responsibility, the appointment process, key characteristics of a successful workforce board member, networking, conflict of interest, Arkansas Freedom of Information Act, and board staff roles

Since its formation in June 2015, newly appointed and experienced members receive annual training regarding their roles and responsibility as a board member. Additionally, the full board and its Strategic Planning, Program and Performance Evaluation, and TANF Oversight Committees conduct quarterly meetings.

#### 4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

##### A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE PROGRAMS

The State will assess its core programs through on-going continuous improvement strategies including:

- State and local level fiscal and programmatic monitoring (on-site and/or desk reviews) of all programs within our combined plan
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys (for both the jobseeker and employer) are conducted annually
- State and local level data validation of all programs within our combined plan
- The Program and Performance Evaluation Committee, a subcommittee of Arkansas Workforce Development Board, will meet quarterly to make recommendations on performance standards for the forthcoming year and to review actual outcomes across programs, make recommendation for improvement and/or corrective action to ensure attainment of performance standards for all partners
- As a state agency, there are annual audits of programs conducted and specific, as needed, audits conducted by a third party

The state also ensures that local workforce development areas meet performance accountability measures and will provide technical assistance when needed. ADWS plans to issue a policy on system assessment to ensure that the current actions are being coordinated in a way that allows core partners to review relevant information and take action to improve the system.

Each agency will be responsible for conducting an evaluation of their programs and reporting results to the PPE Committee of the State Board.

##### B. ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS



At a minimum, workforce delivery system partner program services, and the partner programs included in this Combined State Plan, will be assessed using performance measures they have in common, in addition to other performance accountability measures required by each program's funding source(s) and grants. Performance will be reviewed at both the state and the local workforce area level.

Each program's performance in each of the primary indicators of performance will be a start point for further evaluation of the quality, effectiveness and opportunities for improvement. Each partner program will submit their performance metrics into a statewide dashboard on a quarterly basis. Each partner program will report out to the Program and Performance Evaluation (PPE) Committee with their accomplishments, plans, and strategies to continue to make improvements, how they address areas that are not being met and the identification of resources or support they need to move forward.

The state and local areas will be assessed based on a comparison of the actual performance level with the adjusted level of performance each quarter and annually. The following definitions will be utilized to determine if a core program exceeded, met, or failed to meet the negotiated levels of performance. These definitions are developed based on the understanding that they are the same definitions to be utilized by the federal agencies in determining if the State met performance. Absent federal guidance on this subject at the time of plan development, these definitions may need to be adjusted subsequent to the issuance of federal guidance later in 2016.

**Levels of Proficiency and Actions "Exceed" Condition:** If the actual performance in any indicator is greater than 100 percent of the adjusted level, the measure will be considered to "exceed" the measure's adjusted rate.

**Action:** This is an indication that the program is providing high quality and effective services. The state or local area is expected to, consistent with economic conditions and characteristics of the participants continue to improve its performance. The programs are encouraged to innovate in service delivery, processes and practices. An example is to evaluate programs through a process improvement models, such as Lean Six Sigma, process mapping, simulation, DRIVE.

**"Meet" Condition:** If the actual performance in any indicator is 90 percent or more and lower than 100 percent of the adjusted level, this measure will be determined to "meet".

**Action:** The program is required to improve its performance to meet 100 percent of the adjusted rate. The program will continue to improve processes, practices and to adjust strategies in order to create a higher quality workforce system.

**"At-Risk" Condition:** If the actual performance in any indicator is more than 50 percent and below 90 percent of the adjusted level, the measure will be characterized as "At-Risk". According to the proposed threshold outlined in §677.190(d)(1), each program is required to average at least a 90 percent average of their indicator scores in order to pass the Overall Program Score criteria. Additionally, the second threshold in §677.190(d)(1) requires the state's Overall Indicator Score to be an average score of 90 percent or greater in each indicator across all core programs. In the case of performance characterized as "At-Risk", the individual indicator does not achieve 90 percent of the adjusted score. This may put the state or local area at risk of failing the Overall Indicator Score and Overall Program Score criteria. Meeting the 50 percent threshold is only an indicator that the quality and effectiveness of the program in a specific measure meets the minimum standards established by the Federal government in a specific measure. This performance level is however, not an indication that the overall quality and effectiveness of the program necessarily met.

Action: The program is required to improve its performance to meet the 90 percent threshold by improving processes, practices and to adjust strategies in order to create a higher quality workforce system.

"Fail" Condition: If the actual performance in any indicator is less than 50 percent and the adjusted level, this measure will "fail" the proposed threshold outlined in §677.190(d) (2). This indicates a specific measure requires improvement in order to be compliant with federal standards. It is the minimum standard of the quality and effectiveness of services.

Action: In instances when the state or a local area falls below this threshold, immediate technical assistance will be provided by the appropriate office to improve the proficiency of staff members in providing WIOA services, provide an opportunity to develop strategies to improve the program's ability to meet performance measures.

#### Levels of Proficiency Requirements:

- - - Exceeding Indicator Greater than 100 percent
      - Innovate and stay on top
      - Strive for national excellence
    - Meet Indicator between 90-100 percent
      - - Process, practice improvement, adjust strategies
    - At-Risk Indicator between 50-90 percent
      - - Technical Assistance available, process, practice improvement, adjust strategies
    - Fail Indicator Less than 50 percent
      - Immediate mandatory Technical Assistance, process, practice improvement

#### Additional Metrics

In addition to the primary indicators of performance, secondary metrics may be created and reviewed to more fully assess the activities and performance of a program. The data elements on the WIOA annual state and local report as well as the Eligible Training Provider reports will be reviewed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to workforce training programs. Areas for improvement may be identified from these metrics.

In early 2018, the new chair of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board began to shift the Board's focus beyond the implementation phase and began expressing a desire to implement "evidence-based" policymaking. While this idea is currently in its infancy, it is expected that the framework will include four (4) key components: 1) program assessment via the systematic

review of all available program data 2) developing an inventory of funded programs 3) categorizing programs by their evidence of effectiveness, and 4) attempting to identify each programs' return on investment.

Additionally, the State Board believes that this approach will identify best practices, highlight gaps in our service delivery system, and allow for strategic program improvement.

### C. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board has monitored the performance of WIA (now WIOA) Title I program as well as the Wagner-Peyser Performance. All common and supplemental measures were met or exceeded. A formal evaluation of the Arkansas Workforce Center System has not been conducted since before program year 2011. However, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) has continued to conduct annual monitoring of programmatic and fiscal management of grants to ensure that funds are being spent in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. As part of this ongoing annual monitoring, we have also included a risk management protocol for our WIOA formula and discretionary grants under the purview of ADWS.

The WIOA Roundtable, made up of representatives of the WIOA core partners, plan to re-institute Customer Satisfaction Surveys. These surveys will be similar to those formerly required under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Using the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) as a guide, we will capture common customer satisfaction information from both program participants and employers that can be aggregated and compared across the WIOA partner programs. We believe that this will allow us to assess our workforce system as well as gauge our progress toward continuously improving our service delivery.

In addition, the continuation of oversight of performance outcomes, the Program and Performance Evaluation committee will focus on partners' performance and eligible training providers. Not only do they establish and monitor partner performance, they will also look at continuous improvement strategies related to credential, skills gains, and business performance.

#### **Adult Education Assessments**

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section conducts a number of assessments of subgrantees including quarterly desk audits, annual site visits, and cyclic intensive onsite program reviews. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section monitors programs quarterly through a desk audit process in which measures such as average attendance hours, educational functioning level (EFL) gains across demographic groups, number of students post-tested, etc. are reported and reviewed. The desk audits also allow programs to review operational aspects of the program such as the percentage of funds expended, completion of required professional development, and completed personnel activity reports.

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section also performs an annual site visit for each adult education and literacy program to ensure that state and federal laws and policies are followed, to review program performance, and to connect with Local Education Agency Administrators. Based upon the findings during the site visit, regional program advisors provide technical assistance to program directors and staff to ensure continuous improvement.

Additionally, approximately every four years, a team of program advisors conducts an intensive program review through which Division staff assesses each program in the following areas:

1. Program Management and Reporting
2. Financials
3. Advisory Committees
4. Personnel and Professional Development
5. Student Intake, Documentation, and Orientation
6. Program Policies
7. Instruction
8. Teaching/Classroom Observation
9. Technology
10. Recruitment/Retention
11. Collaboration
12. Facilities
13. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The program review process allows program advisors and the State Disabilities Project Manager to thoroughly assess program operations, observe classroom instruction, and review state and federal laws and policies. Each program review is accompanied by a full financial review by the state agency's finance department.

Once each program is reviewed, the program receives a report which indicates all findings, recommendations, and commendations. The program then develops and submits a Corrective Action Plan (CAP), if applicable, which details how each finding will be remedied. The program director and program advisor work together to ensure that each finding is corrected, at which time the program and Local Education Agency are notified.

The state office requires adult education directors to attend a State Administrators' meeting twice a year. During this time, state staff review policies and procedures, state performance, answer questions, and give providers an opportunity to share best practices.

Additionally, the Adult Education Section annually conducts an Effective and Efficient (E&E) evaluation of each program's performance based on the federal benchmarks. Programs that do not meet the overall benchmark requirement are provided additional technical assistance and monitoring.

In the 2017-18 program year, 7 of the state's 36 programs (20%) did not meet the Effective and Efficient requirement. In 2018-19, that number was reduced to 5 of 36 programs (14%), only one of which was included in the previous year. Based on the findings, we conclude that the intense technical assistance that includes the review of data, program processes and procedures, instructional content and methods and the professional development of staff, through which a performance improvement plan is developed, is valuable in improving the effectiveness of programs.

### **Rehabilitative Services Assessments**

**To establish baselines and meet benchmarks for state with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.** During FY 2018, ARS had 2,520

successful employment outcomes, which is 4.1% below the number of successful outcomes reported in FY 2017. This number is not unexpected as the focus of WIOA is on long-term outcomes. During PY 2018 Second Quarter and Fourth Quarter the employment performance measure rate and the median income rate increased statewide.

**Increase the availability of Supported Employment (SE) services to youth and adults with significant disabilities.** During PY 2018, ARS worked with state and community-based partners to develop agreements to continue provider transformation transitioning facility-based services to a community-based model through support from an Office of Disability Employment Programs grant. In partnership with the Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services, ARS piloted and implemented sequential funding of supported employment services and initiated strategies to implement State Agency as Model Employer in Arkansas. ARS and other involved state agencies signed an agreement that provides guidelines for necessary coordination to ensure competitive employment is the preferred options for individuals with disabilities.

**Improve public relations, marketing, information, outreach, and referrals.** ARS updated marketing materials and provided education and outreach for the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) through multimedia posts and ACTI success stories in agency publications. Field Services improved service provision within the Hispanic population by providing informational resources and increasing utilization of interpreters for Spanish speaking clients. ARS found it not feasible at this time to collect data on CRPs who identify individuals who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language might benefit from ARS services and other support services.

**Increase collaboration with business that leads to increased employment outcomes.** ARS continued to support the growth of Disability: IN – Arkansas. Business Engagement staff developed presentations and revamped print and digital materials to address employer perspectives. ARS facilitated the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Arkansas Business Employment summit, and collaborated with WIOA and community partners to provide career fairs across the state. ACTI expanded apprenticeships, internships, and part-time employment opportunities, engaged in pre-apprenticeship activities with business members of the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, and expanded the registered apprenticeship program to include people with disabilities.

**Expand and improve transition services program.** ARS developed procedural guidance for counselors, vendors, and schools participating in Pre-ETS, and promulgated policy that supports both the traditional Transition and the Pre-ETS programs. ARS developed a transition committee that provides input and suggestions to the various models of Pre-ETS currently in place. ARS signed a statewide Memorandum of Agreement outlining the duties and responsibilities of involved state agencies working in Pre-ETS and transition, and developed individualized MOUs with school districts regarding the implementation of Pre-ETS within the district. ARS conducted Transition Expos across the State, and assisted in the planning and training of the Arkansas Transition Services bi-annual State Transition Summit. ARS provided, through the ARS Transition Program and ACTI, the four-week Transition Employment Program (TEP). ARS also partnered with community providers and Arkansas businesses to host the Project SEARCH® program.

**Develop and improve Community Rehabilitation Programs.** Based on results from the annual ACTI monitoring, ARS concluded ACTI should move from a residential services program to a community-based program. Short- and long-term maintenance needs indicated the residential model was not cost effective to continue. Initial plan development for the new model

is underway. ARS hosted Lunch and Learns to increase quality of relationships with CRPs. It also provided training on Pre-ETS and job placement, which enabled CRP partners to provide new job placement services and new Pre-ETS services such as job exploration, postsecondary guidance, and work-based learning in the schools. ARS initiated new purchased service agreements for community-based services with outcome reimbursement payments.

**Improve training, resources, and continuing education.** ARS trained staff on the external employment vendor services with the addition of the 2018 implementation of the ARS/DDS service partnership and on how to complete case management. Field Services management provided information to Staff Development and Training about staff training needs on a monthly basis and Staff Development and Training monitored the effectiveness of the trainings offered. ACTI partnered with National Park College to arrange an articulation agreement for the Certified Production Technology class.

**Improve ARS' ability to act as a resource when assisting individuals with disabilities and employers in addressing accommodation needs.** ARS renamed the Retaining a Valued Employee (RaVE) program to Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/TRW) to better reflect programs/practices in the private/public sector employment and to better communicate functional intent. ARS sufficiently staffed AT@ Work by filling a vacant Occupational Therapist position and by transferring a Physical Therapist position.

**Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery for agency clients.** Trained field staff to reduce data entry error ratios and audit findings. ARS partnered with the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville to provide career counseling to all sub-minimum wage 14(c) providers serving over 6,000 clients. Field Services updated the agency's policy to include the WIOA changes, with an effective date of January 1, 2019. Rehab area managers trained staff on the policy updates and reviewed and monitored policies and procedures at monthly staff meetings. ACTI converted its paper case management system to an electronic system, which has improved communication between ACTI counselors and field counselors.

#### **Division of Service for the Blind Assessments**

**To establish baselines and meet benchmarks for state with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.** During FFY 2018, DSB had 275 successful employment outcomes, which is 10% below the number of successful outcomes reported in FFY 2017. This change is due to DSB's transition to focus on long term employment outcomes for consumers. During PY 2018 Second Quarter and Forth Quarter the employment performance measure rate and the median income rate increased statewide.

**Increase the availability of Supported Employment (SE) services to youth and adults with significant disabilities.** During PY 2018, DSB worked with the Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and other state agencies to sign and implement an agreement that provides guidance on necessary coordination to ensure competitive employment as the first option for individuals with disabilities.

**Improve public relations, marketing, information, outreach, and referrals.** DSB worked with partners and outside agencies to train DSB staff on outreach and marketing as part of the effort to improve outreach and increase referrals. DSB is currently working to update and improve all marketing information with updated contact information since moving to be a part of the Division of Workforce Services.

**Expand and improve transition services program.** DSB worked with WINTAC (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Technical Assistance Center) to develop and update policy on Pre-ETS and transition services. This included improving internal procedures, DSB forms, and processes to enhance DSB's ability to work with Students with A Disability. DSB participates in Transition Fairs across the state. DSB signed a statewide Memorandum of Agreement outlining the duties and responsibilities of involved state agencies working in Pre-ETS and transition and developed individualized MOUs with school districts regarding the implementation of Pre-ETS within the district. DSB also partnered with community providers and Arkansas businesses to host the Project SEARCH® program.

**Improve training, resources, and continuing education.** DSB provided regional trainings to staff at least 4 times throughout the year. Training reviewed the case process from referral to closure and reporting. Continual training was available as needed on the case management system for staff and procedures and guides were created and distributed to staff on various parts of the case management process.

**Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery for agency clients.** DSB provided training to field staff on common errors and concerns in service delivery. New policy was developed and prepared for approval by the DSB Board with the support of WINTAC to ensure compliance with WIOA. New policy is an ongoing process with chapters being reviewed by all stake holders and then sent for promulgation to improve service delivery.

#### D. EVALUATION

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) has the responsibility for ensuring public accountability by evaluating the effectiveness of the overall workforce development system. For the federal WIOA performance accountability measures and state measures, each core partner will have a monitoring and corrective action process at the state level that assures identified deficiencies, to the extent they occur, are addressed. This process is intended to be based primarily on data analysis but shall also include monitoring tools at the discretion of the core program. If annual performance targets are not met by any core program, the AWDB may request that the core program submit a corrective action plan.

In the event of a corrective action plan being implemented, the partner will provide regular progress reports to ADWS and other parties.

The AWDB will evaluate its core programs through on-going continuous improvement strategies including:

1. Program performance effectiveness utilizing the State's Information Management System at the state and local level
2. Review of state and local level data presented on a performance dashboard
3. Core Program Monitoring and Compliance reviews annually
4. Local Workforce Development Area annual reports
5. State and local risk assessment evaluations to review:

#### Governance

Administrative, program/grant, and financial management systems o Program services, delivery systems, and documentation, and o Performance accountability.

Statewide core partner meetings held bi-annually to discuss and review program effectiveness, best practices and provide technical assistance.

As previously mentioned, we plan to enhance our evaluation protocols beyond the standard program performance matrix with the re-introduction of customer satisfaction surveys for both program participants and employers. We believe that this will provide WIOA core program administrators and Local Workforce Boards with sufficient data to assess the quality of our state's workforce development system.

Additionally, we plan to seek guidance from and coordinate with the Employment and Training Administration - Office of Policy Development and Research to ensure that our efforts are in line with the increased focus upon program evaluations under WIOA.

#### Title II, AEFLA: Adult Education Section

Adult education state staff evaluates providers quarterly through the review of each program's quarterly report submission. In it, providers review and report progress on average attendance hours, educational functioning level (EFL) gains, number and percentage of students post-tested, etc. Quarterly reports also allow providers to review operational aspects of the program such as the percentage of funds expended, completion of required professional development, and completed personnel activity reports.

ADWS/AES also performs an annual site visit for each adult education and literacy provider to ensure that state and federal laws and policies are followed, to review program performance, and to connect with Local Education Agency Administrators. Based upon the findings during the site visit, regional program advisors provide technical assistance to program directors and staff to ensure continuous improvement.

Additionally, each year 25% of the current 36 adult education and literacy providers receive a program review, which is a three-day intensive program monitoring and technical site visit by a team of program advisors in the state office. Each provider can expect to have a program review every four years provided there are no major risks or violations identified during an annual site visit, which would increase review frequency. Providers are assessed in areas including, but not limited to, Program Management and Reporting, Financials, Technology, and Collaboration. This program review process allows program advisors and the State Disabilities Project Manager to thoroughly assess program operations, observe classroom instruction, and review state and federal laws and policies. Once each program is reviewed, ADWS/AES requests a full financial audit review by the agency's state finance department.

ADWS/AES evaluates each program annually through an E&E (Effective and Efficient) calculation, currently based upon the programs' progress on the federally negotiated benchmarks in Table 4. Programs that do not meet the determined percentage of the benchmarks are provided additional technical assistance in order to prepare a performance improvement plan. Plan implementation is monitored throughout the year. Upon not meeting the requirements of E&E for three consecutive years, ADWS/AES makes a recommendation to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board as to whether or not the program should continue to be funded.

Lastly, mandatory Administrators' Meetings are held twice a year in which policies and procedures are discussed and information is disseminated. During the administrators' meeting, providers share best practices with one another as well as gain additional professional development training from staff or guest speakers.

#### New Evaluation



As required by 20 CFR § 682.200(d), States must use funds reserved by the Governor for statewide activities to conduct evaluations of activities under the WIOA title I core programs in order to promote continuous improvement, research and test innovative services and strategies, and achieve high levels of performance and outcomes.

ADWS, following input from the AWDB during the July 16, 2019, meeting negotiated a contract for an evaluation with the University of Arkansas. The following requirements are the basis of the negotiation.

The following evaluations using *designs that employ the most rigorous analytical and statistical methods that are reasonably feasible, such as the use of control groups* (20 CFR § 682.220) as appropriate:

1.
  - a. Local Integration Study- Sample Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I or Title III participants for 3 Local Workforce Development Areas. This part of the evaluation will focus on two primary areas: 1. Co-enrollment and Co-funding of REQUIRED WIOA Partners and 2. Leveraging of Local Resources available in the Local Workforce Development Area.
2. Sample Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I and Title III participants for 3 Local Workforce Development Areas-to determine if, based on the participants information in the Case File, the participant might have been eligible to receive services under the required partners listed in 20 CFR § 678.400.
3. For each local area selected, interview leadership to identify partner programs and non-profits that collaborate with the Workforce Centers beyond the list of required partners above. For all partners, required in number 1 and other partners identified in 2, report whether there exists:
  - a. Memorandums of Understanding between the programs/entities
    - i. Referral Procedures
      1. Training for partners regarding the services provided or alternative print materials to assist in collaboration OR
        - a. An alternative method to refer clients between the partners effectively
4. Identify and report entities in the selected local areas that provide services to the following targeted populations:
  - Displaced Homemaker
  - Low Income
  - Limited English Proficiency
  - Migrant Worker
  - Disabled
  - Veteran

- Older Worker
- Out of School Youth
- Foster Youth
- Basic Skill Deficient
- Ex-Offender
- Single Parent
- TANF Recipient
- SNAP Recipient
- SSDI Recipient
- UI Claimant
- Long-Term Unemployed

For all programs and services identified in steps 1, 2, and 3, report whether sampled participants were: referred to or co-enrolled in other programs or services.

1.
  - a. In the Comprehensive Centers for the 3 Local Areas selected for sampling, report case studies on effectiveness of identifying and closing Skill-Gaps

Interview staff for examples of:

2. Skills-gap identification on either the occupation level, based on demand, or the skill-level based on interaction with an employer.
3. Determine the services that were provided to address the skills-gap
4. Provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the services provided in closing the skills-gap, if possible.

Review a sample of Arkansas Workforce Centers against the State's certification policy and applicable laws/regulations for four comprehensive centers and two affiliate centers. Each of the six centers selected should be located in different Local Workforce Development Areas and may be selected from Local Workforce Development Areas that overlap the 3 selected above

1. Conduct a statewide customer service survey for business customers of WIOA Title I and Title III receiving services over the most recent 12 months available.
2. Provide evaluation status reports on a monthly basis on overall project goals. These reports will be issued at the end of February, March, April, May, June, and July of 2020.
3. Provide a preliminary evaluation report by August 15, 2020.
4. Provide a final evaluation, with results, best practices, and recommendations by September 30, 2020.

## 5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

## A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

### I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) coordinates and establishes policy for conducting all employment and training activities within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 and Arkansas Code §15-4-3707 through 15-4-3713, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas's one-stop centers. The criteria for funding the programs included in this plan will be consistent with the federal and state laws governing those programs and are described in detail in the funding sections below.

The chief elected official or lead elected official in a local workforce development area will serve as the local grant recipient for, and shall be liable for any misuse of, the grant funds allocated to the local area for youth, adult, and dislocated worker activities under Sections 128, 129, 132, and 133 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

In a case in which a local workforce development area includes more than one unit of general local government, the chief elected officials of such units will execute an agreement that specifies the respective roles of the individual chief elected officials, including responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the allocated funds. If, after a reasonable effort, the chief elected officials are unable to reach agreement about this responsibility, the Governor makes the determination. The local plan must include the agreement concerning this responsibility.

In order to assist in the disbursement of the grant funds, the chief elected official or lead elected official of a local workforce development area may designate an entity to serve as a local grant sub-recipient for such funds or as a local fiscal agent. Such designation shall not relieve the chief elected official or lead elected official of the liability for any misuse of grant funds. The local grant recipient or sub-recipient will disburse such funds for workforce development activities at the direction of the local board. The local grant recipient or sub-recipient will disburse the funds immediately on receiving such direction from the local board. The local board, in partnership with the chief elected official(s), will conduct oversight with respect to local programs of youth activities authorized under WIOA Section 129, local employment and training activities authorized under WIOA Section 134, and the One-Stop delivery system in the local area.

**WIOA Title I Youth Funding Allocation Formula** The in-state allotment of funds to local workforce investment areas for Title I youth activities under the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act will be made using the formula described at Section 128(b)(2)(A)(i), as follows:

- 33 1/3 percent of the funds to the local workforce investment areas will be based on the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each workforce development area compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in all areas of substantial unemployment in the state
- 33 1/3 percent of the funds based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each workforce development area compared with the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the state
- 33 1/3 percent of the funds based on the relative number of disadvantaged youth in each workforce development area compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth in the state

To ensure that youth funds are distributed equitably and to avoid significant shifts in funding levels to local areas, a hold-harmless provision will be applied. Under this provision, consistent

with WIOA Section 128(b)(2)(A)(ii), a local area will not receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence will be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

In accordance with WIOA law, Arkansas Workforce Development Board has adopted a funding allocation methodology for those Local Areas with High Concentrations of Eligible Youth. This methodology calculates determines each Local Area's weighted average of "eligible youth" and, if the average exceeds the overall state average, additional funding will be awarded.

## II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

The in-state allotment of funds to local workforce investment areas for Title I adult activities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act will be made using the formula described at Section 132(b)(1)(B)(ii), as follows:

- 33 1/3 percent of the funds to the local workforce development areas will be based on the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each workforce development area compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in all areas of substantial unemployment in the state
- 33 1/3 percent of the funds based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each workforce development area compared with the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the state
- 33 1/3 percent of the funds based on the relative number of disadvantaged adults in each workforce development area compared to the number of disadvantaged adults in the state

To ensure that adult funds are distributed equitably and to avoid significant shifts in funding levels to local areas, a hold-harmless provision also will be applied. Under this provision, consistent with WIOA Section 132(b)(1)(B)(iv), a local area will not receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence will be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

## III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

Funds for dislocated workers will be allocated based on an allocation formula prescribed by the Governor of Arkansas. This formula may be amended by the Governor not more than once for each program year. The formula will use the most appropriate information available to the Governor to distribute amounts to address Arkansas's worker readjustment assistance needs. The in-state allotment of funds to local workforce development areas for Title I dislocated worker activities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act will be distributed by placing the following weights on six factors:

- 5 percent insured unemployment
- 15 percent unemployment concentrations
- 30 percent plant closings and mass layoffs

- 15 percent declining industries
- 5 percent farmer-rancher economic hardship
- 30 percent long-term unemployment

To ensure that dislocated worker funds are distributed equitably and to avoid significant shifts in funding levels to local areas, a hold-harmless provision also will be applied. Under this provision, consistent with WIOA Section 133(b)(2)(B)(iii), a local area will not receive an allocation percentage for fiscal year 2016 or subsequent fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence will be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

Not more than twenty-five percent of the total state allotment will be reserved for Rapid Response activities. Rapid Response activities in Arkansas are administered by Arkansas Division of Workforce Services as the lead agency of the Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force.

## B. FOR TITLE II

### I. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL AWARD MULTI-YEAR GRANTS OR CONTRACTS ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS TO ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS IN THE STATE, INCLUDING HOW ELIGIBLE AGENCIES WILL ESTABLISH THAT ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS ARE ORGANIZATIONS OF DEMONSTRATED EFFECTIVENESS

The Adult Education Section will award multi-year grants to eligible local providers through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process for the purpose of developing, implementing, and improving adult education and literacy within the state. The grant will be for a four-year cycle that applies to all programs; however, the state office will review the performance level of providers after two years to determine whether or not to conduct a new competition.

In order for an application to be reviewed, considered and scored for funding, the applicant must:

1.
  - a. Be currently located and providing services within the state of Arkansas.
  - b. Be an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness:
    - i. An applicant that has been previously funded under *AEFLA*, as amended by *WIOA*, must submit performance data required under section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness.
    - ii. An applicant that has not been previously funded under *AEFLA*, as amended by *WIOA* must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of its success in achieving outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training

If an applicant applies as a consortium, demonstrated effectiveness data from each consortium member is evaluated to determine if each member is an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness. All consortium members must be determined to be an eligible provider of

demonstrated effectiveness in order for the consortium application to be reviewed, scored and considered for funding. **Only applicants that have been determined to be submitted by an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness are forwarded to be reviewed, scored and considered for funding.**

## II. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS

The Adult Education Section will ensure that all eligible providers are given direct and equitable access to compete for Title II, AEFLA sections 225 (Correctional/Institutional), 231 (Direct and Equitable), and 243 (Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education) federal funds. The same grant announcement, application, and process will be used for all eligible providers and each proposal will be treated the same way in evaluation.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) announcement will be placed in the statewide newspaper for three consecutive days and on the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration's website as required by the state's Procurement process. In addition, the announcement will be placed on the Adult Education Section's website. Prior to the announcement of an RFP, the Adult Education Section state staff will be provided training on the RFP process by the Adult Education Senior Management Team, which includes the State Director to ensure internal control and standardization. Once the RFP has been publicly announced, no staff member may discuss with any applicant anything regarding the RFP application or process. Any inquiries will need to be e-mailed to [adulted@arkansas.gov](mailto:adulted@arkansas.gov). On a bi-weekly basis the date, name of person, question, and response will be placed on the website in a cumulative RFP Questions and Answers spreadsheet. This ensures that all eligible applicant has a direct and equitable access to the questions.

All applicants that have shown and met the demonstrated effectiveness requirement will also be evaluated using the 13 Statutory Considerations as found in the law at 231 (e)(1-13). In addition to the RFP application, eligible providers will have a rubric that shows how applications will be evaluated.

A formula method will be used to determine the amount of funding and takes into consideration the literacy rate and the core indicators of performance as outlined in Title II of the WIOA law. The state will identify, assess, and award grants using the RFP process of providers who have demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities to eligible individuals. An eligible individual is an individual who has attained 16 years of age; who is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and who is basic skills deficient; does not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and has not achieved an equivalent level of education; or is an English language learner.

In addition, other factors that will be considered is the ability of the eligible providers to meet the literacy needs in the area may include, but not limited to, the ability to comply with WIOA and state expectations, the ability to provide services to special populations such as an individual with barriers to employment as defined in WIOA Section 3 (24), past performance of the entity in providing literacy instruction and meeting programmatic goals, overall program management, timely submission of financial and quarterly reports to the state office, and the overall qualification and expertise of the providers' personnel. Again, the list of criteria used to evaluate demonstrated effectiveness and the scoring rubric has been made available as part of

the RFP process. At the end of two years, the state will reevaluate the providers to determine whether to conduct a new Request for Proposal competition or not.

Currently, the adult education providers in the state are divided into five regions and include the Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Northwest, and Central Regions. Although there may be multiple providers within an area, the state has reconfigured all 75 counties to better align with the 10 Workforce Development Boards (WDB). The purpose of restructuring the state is to help align service delivery under WIOA and enhance the coordination and support of the overall economic development of the State.

Adult education/literacy providers are housed under a local education agency such as a school districts, community colleges, institutions of higher education, and literacy organizations. Other eligible providers have been and will continue to be considered using a direct and equitable process. Funding is awarded to local adult education/literacy providers through a competitive grant process based on literacy rate and the core indicators of performance as outlined in Title II of the WIOA law. Applications are competitive, open, and available to all eligible applicants. Grants/contracts are awarded for one year, with two one-year renewals based on performance and available funding.

No less than 95% of federal funds shall be expended for carrying out adult education and literacy activities; and the remaining amount, not to exceed 5%, shall be used for planning, administration (including carrying out the requirements of section 116), professional development, and the activities described in WIOA paragraphs (3) and (5) of section 232.

#### C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Distribution of funds between the two Vocational Rehabilitation designated state units, (Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Services for the Blind) is done under written agreement of the heads of the two DSUs in consideration of the incidence and severity of disability and the historical cost of rehabilitation for the two populations. Such agreement distributes 88% of the VR grant to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) and 12% to Division of Services for the Blind (DSB). In accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act, Arkansas state law designates the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) as the state agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind.

### 6. PROGRAM DATA

#### A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

The newly-created Department of Commerce operates a collection of different IT systems to capture participant information, services, and outcomes. While Titles I & III utilize a common system, the other core WIOA partner programs continue to use legacy systems that were transferred to Commerce as programs were moved to the Department. The Department of Commerce supports efforts to increase efficiency while maintaining quality levels of service through judicious use of resources and adhering to policy (local, state, and federal). Prior to the establishment of the Department of Commerce on July 1, 2019, the WIOA Roundtable (consisting of each WIOA core partner) had been evaluating workforce system solutions in other states to better unite the case management and job search functions of our programs. We are increasing these efforts now that each of Arkansas' WIOA core partners under the Department of Commerce umbrella. Our intentions are to identify ways to either integrate or replace these legacy systems. These Department of Commerce believes that our efforts will

eventually lead to the implementation of a data warehouse and analytics platform that will support oversight, consumer education, and decision-making at all levels of the workforce system. The integrated warehouse may also be a means to deliver some of the benefits that an integrated case management system is envisioned as providing. This model will allow Commerce to work to develop advanced statistical models that can help identify not only who most needs services but to also help prescribe the types of services that may be most effective for a given customer based on what we learn from having served similarly situated customers in the past.

#### Common Intake Efforts that will Support Assessment and Evaluation-

Employment Services and the Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Workers programs share a common case management system. The contractor, AJLA, has the following deliverables that are contingent on partner program's case management systems adopting the common file referenced below and working with the AJLA to establish the API process for each system:

- Create new tables to store API data from partner agencies
- Add new fields to Data Base for Arkansas Common Intake Web Service
- Create email notification for stub accounts
- Create enrollment for partner agencies
- Process for determining matches
- Create API to send data to partners
- Create API to consume data from partners (Rehabilitative Services, Rehabilitative Services (vision impaired, and Adult Education)
- Process for creating Common ID
- Create stub account in Arkansas JobLink (AJL)

These processes will allow the partner's databases to be matched, compared, and updated, regardless of which program interacts with the potential client first. Although the service has been offered, partner programs have not been able to connect to the program to date. Having this combined database will enhance our ability to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the system of the state's workforce development programs.

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- Create API to send data to partners
- Create API to consume data from partners (Rehabilitative Services, Rehabilitative Services (vision impaired, and Adult Education)
- Process for creating Common ID
- Create stub account in Arkansas JobLink (AJL)

These processes will allow the partner's databases to be matched, compared, and updated, regardless of which program interacts with the potential client first. Although this service has been offered, partner programs have not been able to connect to the service due to funding. The Core Partner Programs continue to make this effort a priority.

Once established, the new database that results from partners' connected systems will advance goals by:

- Increasing staff access to systems services;
- Integrating and aligning WIOA systems and services;
- Equipping staff, Boards and their partners, and service providers with innovative technology and tools;
- Delivering excellent customer service and customer experiences in our Arkansas Workforce Centers;
- Delivering excellent customer outcomes; and
- Streamline mission critical case management services and activities for staff and Workforce Boards, that will address complicated integration and/or lack of integration between our multiple stand-alone systems and platforms of varying ages.

The state board has established data systems alignment as one of its objective under the overall goal of enhancing service delivery to workforce customers. The Board has charged staff with researching the availability of an integrated data system that will enable the sharing of information between partner agencies to more efficiently service both employers and jobseekers. The identification of such a system must be in compliance with the Governor's overall vision.

Until such time that an integrated system can be built, the core program agencies will work cooperatively to produce the required federal performance reports utilizing Unemployment Insurance wage data and the Arkansas Longitudinal Data System, which connects data from education, higher education and workforce programs.

#### B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

Moving forward, the Arkansas Workforce Development Board's vision is for the state's workforce development system partners to develop the ability to capture a more complete set of customer data from all federal and state-funded employment and training programs coupled with a customer-focused data model that will allow aggregating data into any combination of programs and characteristics. This will allow our system to meet program reporting requirements as well as permit other views of the data. Key to its effectiveness is the ability to report a participant's outcomes the same way for every program or aggregation of data.

While the progress of participants who are exiting from the core programs will be assessed through follow up by the core programs that provided service, it is important to remember that follow-up services should help each participant complete training and/or maintain employment. Furthermore, follow-up should provide a continuous link to the workforce system as a whole, including referral networks and partner programs. While there may be some variances in the follow-up, based upon needs of the individual, a consistent message in each follow-up contact will ensure that participants know which services are available to them, even after program exit.

The WIOA Roundtable will seek to develop a common follow-up procedures that are designed for the purpose of career planning, rather than required program performance reporting.

#### C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data will be utilized for data matching purposes for assessing and reporting on state and local employment and training program performance, evaluating training provider performance, and for other purposes allowed by state law and data sharing agreements among state agencies. By utilizing UI Wage Data, the State can measure entered employment, employment retention, and earnings of the individual. This will help measure the success of the workforce development services being provided.

Furthermore, the State will utilize Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) data to track performance outcomes. The use of WRIS data permits state workforce program performance agencies to secure wage data of individuals who have participated in workforce investment programs in one state, then subsequently secured employment in another. By participating in WRIS, the State has a more robust picture of the effectiveness of workforce development programs and is able to report more comprehensive outcomes against their performance measures.

#### D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

The State is aware that a key element of success to utilizing data across agencies for either improved customer service or improved measurement and tracking of outcomes is ensuring the integrity of all data and ensuring confidential data is treated as such. This is accomplished with various technical safeguards and ensuring personnel handling this data are properly trained in all relevant regulations and the fundamentals of handling personal and confidential data. Technical safeguards may include:

- Approved processes that limit access to the data to only those personnel who require access to carry out their daily job functions;
  - Network security, monitoring, firewalls, etc. to prevent unauthorized access to data from entities outside of State government;
    - Encryption technology; and
    - Secure data transport mechanisms.

Data Sharing Agreements are used when confidential information is shared with another entity. All partners that will provide and share data in collaboration efforts will enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and/or a data sharing agreement to ensure security of sensitive information.

All partners expressly agree to abide by all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding confidential information and to adhere to the same standards of confidentiality as state

employees, including but not limited to: 29 U.S.C. 2935; as amended by WIOA - reports, recordkeeping, and investigations. 29 U.S.C. 2871(f)(3); as amended by WIOA - regarding confidentiality. 20 CFR Part 603 - safeguards and security requirements regarding disclosed information under Unemployment Compensation. 42 U.S.C. 503 - regarding state laws governing Unemployed Insurance operations. 20 CFR 617.57(b) - regarding disclosure of information under the Trade Act. 29 U.S.C. 491-2(a)(2); as amended under WIOA - regarding information to be confidential under the Wagner-Peyser Act. The Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552). The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g). 34 CFR 361.38 - protection, use, and release of personal information of Vocational Rehabilitation Services participants. HIPAA: 45 CFR 164.500 - 164.534. 2 CFR 200.303 - regarding reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information.

## 7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

Arkansas provides veterans' priority of service as mandated by Veterans Program Letter 07-09., and TEGL 07-09., "Implementing Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses in all Qualified Job Training Programs Funded in Whole or in Part by the U.S. Department of Labor. Service is provided to ensure veterans and covered persons receive consideration for all opportunities, for which they qualify. This increased focus includes the implementation of strategies and policies designed to ensure veterans and eligible persons of veterans receive the highest level of quality service within the framework of priority of service. Arkansas increased its focus on veterans' priority of service as a direct result of federal regulations. This increased focus includes the implementation of strategies and policies designed to ensure veterans and eligible persons receive the highest level of quality service within the framework of priority of service. The requirements of veterans' priority of service as promulgated in Federal regulations are communicated via a statewide Veterans Priority of Service Policy, WIOA-1-8. 2-2.

Arkansas requires that all Local Workforce center staff members and other service providers give priority of service to eligible veterans, eligible persons, VR&E veterans, and other such groups targeted for special consideration. DVOP Specialists focus their efforts on assisting veterans most in need of their services including eligible veterans and eligible persons with an SBE, Vietnam-era, and/or veterans between 18-24 years of age. Local areas must ensure that veterans and eligible persons are served first and that this protocol is addressed in functional alignment plans and customer flow processes. Targeted veteran populations will be referred to DVOP Specialists (when available) or Wagner-Peyser staff members for the provision of individualized career services and other resources the veterans may require meeting their career goals.

Local offices must ensure that veterans and eligible persons are served first and that this protocol is addressed in the functional alignment plans and customer flow process. During the registration process, a series of questions identifies veteran status. Once the veteran or other eligible person is identified, the first available WFC staff conducts an initial assessment. This initial assessment uses a customized intake form, to help determine if the veteran or other eligible person has a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE) or that they may be a member of another special priority group. During the initial assessment it is determined that the veteran has an SBE; they will be immediately referred to a Disable Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) or other trained staff for the provision of Individual Career Services and other services the veterans may need to meet their career goals.

ADWS regularly monitors Priority of Service through scheduled trainings, calls with managers and supervisors, and when making on-site visits at the Local Workforce Centers.

Signage –Appropriate signage will play a pivotal role if priority of service is to be implemented successfully. As such, Arkansas has designed, published, and distributed appropriate signage to all Centers and affiliate service sites throughout the state. Signage must be placed prominently at or near the entrance, as this may encourage customers to register first so that veteran status can be determined and documented as soon as possible. The placement of additional signage is required; however, the location of this additional signage is at the discretion of the Center Manager. It is strongly advised that the additional signage be placed in strategic locations and high traffic areas throughout the center, such as resource rooms and common waiting areas.

#### 8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The workforce center delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the workforce delivery system partners) will comply with section 188 of WIOA and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. The State ensures that Arkansas Workforce Center system complies with section 188 of WIOA and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 through the development and implementation of a Methods of Administration Policy that outlines all requirements of the system. Reviews are conducted annually to make sure that workforce centers meet requirements. Furthermore, training is offered at least annually to equal opportunity officers of the local workforce development boards. To demonstrate compliance with this provision, the one-stop center operators and the delivery system partners will collaborate to develop and provide periodic and new-hire staff training and system-wide support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. A rotating certification review team will be established, to provide scheduled evaluation, certification and recertification of the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities and to address any compliance issues that arise.

According to the Arkansas Workforce Center Certification criteria, all Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance requirements must be met before a center is eligible to receive the Arkansas Workforce Center certification or utilize the Arkansas Workforce Center name and logo. Both the Methods of Administration and the Arkansas Workforce Center Certification criteria are being updated to reflect changes in the WIOA law. The original Methods of Administration policy and Arkansas Workforce Center Certification policies are available online at <http://dws.arkansas.gov/AWDB/Information.htm> under the Policies and Procedures section.

Programs that apply for funding from the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services - Adult Education Section have access to the resources, training, and materials available from the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC). The AALRC is responsible for providing information, materials, resources, and training to local programs to assist in ensuring equitable access to and participation in those programs, including all students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries.

All local programs are required to post public notices that address non-discrimination policies regarding accessibility and participation regardless of gender, race, national origin, age, or religion, in accordance with the Civil Rights Act. In addition, local programs are required to provide on-going information to applicants, participants, beneficiaries, and other interested parties regarding the rights of people under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Title II applications to their particular programs, services, and activities.

Methods of providing information include publication in handbooks, manuals, and enrollment and application materials that are distributed to the public to describe the local program and its activities. Other methods include the display of informational posters in local programs and other public places and/or information broadcast on television or radio. Public notice of ADA requirements must be made available in alternative formats to meet the diverse communication needs of persons with disabilities.

Since 1995, the AALRC has specifically addressed two major barriers to program access in Arkansas. Steps taken to address barriers to access are listed below:

- Provide in-depth training about learning disabilities to all programs.
- Assist programs in complying with legal requirements as mandated by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the ADA, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Assistance includes providing information, training, and resources.
- Assist programs in coordinating with other state agencies and organizations that provide services and resources for individuals with disabilities, such as the Office for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (ODHI), Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN), and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS).
- Provide training to a variety of state agencies and organizations about learning disabilities and how to coordinate services, including screening, diagnosis, materials and resources, strategies and accommodations. Provide training and information to all state GED<sup>®</sup> examiners about requesting and receiving accommodations on the GED<sup>®</sup> tests.
- Provide assistance to local programs in the administration of other tests and instructional materials with accommodations.
- Work with publishing companies to ensure test materials used in adult education and literacy programs are available in alternative formats e.g., CD/DVD, Braille, large-print, etc., to accommodate students with disabilities. Also, that the tests have been field-tested and conform to test norms for adults with disabilities populations.
- Continue to coordinate training efforts with University Affiliated Programs to provide training in the ADA for local service providers.
- Create a seamless, statewide system which ensures that any adult education or literacy student with possible undiagnosed learning disabilities will have access to diagnostic assessment; that local programs providing services know how to access the statewide system; and that the system includes an agreed-to protocol regarding gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age, to ensure equitable accessibility and participation.
- Assist local programs in the provision of instructional materials available in alternative formats, as well as assisting in the implementation of accommodated instruction for students with disabilities.
- Assist local programs in the acquisition of technology devices that assist accommodated instruction and assessment for students with disabilities.

#### 9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The One-Stop Delivery System must meet the needs of the limited English proficient (LEP) individuals seeking services. One stop centers and system partners should provide multi-lingual

forms, brochures, and other related materials that relate to services, information, and guidance to LEP individuals. Multi-lingual materials should reflect the common or dominate language(s) locally. One stop centers should establish relationships with local businesses to provide employment referrals compatible for LEP individuals. One stop centers and system partners should establish an effective referral process to local adult education centers with English as a second language (ESL) classes to provide LEP individuals language education and other educational services, such as gaining a high school equivalency diploma and employability certificates. One stop center staff should be trained to access the appropriate materials and resources for LEP individuals. When possible and needed, an effort to hire and train bilingual staff should be made. There are ten workforce centers in the State that have bilingual staff members. Furthermore, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has contracts with various vendors to provide interpreter services in multiple languages. These interpreter services can be utilized by LEP individuals and staff members in any of the State's workforce centers.

#### IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and its Adult Education Services Division, Rehabilitative Services Division, and Division of Services for the Blind began meeting to discuss the implication of the new legislation and begin necessary discussions for the successful implementation of the federal law in Arkansas.

In November 2014, representatives from each of these agencies formed a WIOA Roundtable that met monthly and soon were joined by additional representatives from Registered Apprenticeship, higher education, secondary education, two- and four-year educational institutions, Carl D. Perkins secondary and post-secondary programs, Career and Technical Education, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, human services, and elected officials to engage in discussions about integration of services provided by a multitude of service providers. This planning team established committees to focus on critical areas in WIOA implementation to include: finance, IT system integration, policy development, core performance measures, sector strategies, and the development of the state workforce development plan.

The WIOA Roundtable continues to meet monthly to discuss ways to best align programs, prevent duplication, and increase access to services for jobseekers and employers. This plan was developed jointly by members of the Arkansas WIOA Roundtable.

In March 2015 and September 2015, a meeting of directors, managers, and supervisors from local workforce development boards and core partners was held and attended by more than 250 individuals from across Arkansas to talk about implementation strategies at the local level.

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board, a business led board, was formed in May 2015 and includes the directors of the core partner program agencies as members in addition to secondary education, higher education, and economic development. The goals and strategies included in this plan are the product of many months of strategic planning and input from various sources.

In July 2015, a statewide WIOA training and strategy session was held and was attended by 500 individuals representing state and local workforce boards members, core and optional workforce partner programs, secondary and higher education, state and local economic development, community-based organizations, employers, and elected officials.

In November and December of 2015, a strategic planning session was held by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board to frame out the goals and strategies to be included in the state

plan. An invitation was extended to the Arkansas Career Education and Workforce Development Board, the oversight board for the agency that administers the Adult Education and Vocational

Rehabilitation Services programs, to join in the planning process to ensure that both boards were moving in the same direction as it relates to workforce development in Arkansas.

Beginning in 2016 and continuing since then, the biannual WIOA statewide partners meetings have been conducted. These meetings are a continuation of the training and strategy sessions that began in 2015 and provide ongoing opportunities for all WIOA partner representatives to convene and discuss the ongoing development of the state's workforce development system.

## V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

## VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

#### A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

##### 1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The State of Arkansas consists of ten local workforce development areas and nine planning regions.

The ten local workforce development areas (LWDA) are as follows: Central LWDA, which consists of Faulkner, Lonoke, Monroe, Prairie, Pulaski, Saline counties; the City of Little Rock LWDA, which consists of the city limits of Little Rock, Arkansas; Eastern LWDA, which consists of Cross, Crittenden, Lee, Phillips, Saint Francis counties; North Central LWDA, which consists of Cleburne, Fulton, Jackson, Independence, Izard, Sharp, Stone, Van Buren, White, Woodruff counties; Northeast LWDA, which consists of Clay, Craighead, Greene, Lawrence, Mississippi, Poinsett, Randolph counties; Northwest LWDA, which consists of Baxter, Benton, Boone, Carroll, Madison, Marion, Newton, Searcy, Washington counties; Southeast LWDA, which consists of Arkansas, Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Cleveland, Desha, Drew, Grant, Jefferson, Lincoln counties; Southwest LWDA, which consists of Calhoun, Columbia, Dallas, Hempstead, Howard, Lafayette, Little River, Miller, Nevada, Ouachita, Sevier, Union counties; West Central LWDA, which consists of Clark, Conway, Garland, Hot Spring, Johnson, Montgomery, Perry, Pike Pope, Yell counties; and Western LWDA, which consists of Crawford, Franklin, Logan, Polk, Scott, Sebastian counties.

For planning purposes, the following nine regions were identified: Central Region, which is made up of the Central LWDA and the City of Little Rock LWDA; Eastern Region, which is made up of the Eastern LWDA; North Central Region, which is made up of the North Central LWDA; Northeast Region, which is made up of the Northeast LWDA; Northwest Region, which is made up of the Northwest LWDA; Southeast Region, which is made up of the Southeast LWDA; Southwest Region, which is made up of the Southwest LWDA; West Central Region, which is made up of the West Central LWDA; and the Western Region, which is made up of the Western LWDA.



A visual depiction of the Local Workforce Development Areas is available at:

<http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart14.html>

The local workforce development areas were selected based on infrastructure already in place under the previous federal law (Workforce Investment Act) and the alignment those areas have with local economic development planning districts. Each of the previous ten local workforce investment areas had sustained fiscal integrity as defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and while only one of the ten local areas had met 100 percent of all nine performance targets two years in a row, the local areas did meet performance within 80 percent of targets, which is the measure of success for the State as a whole.

All multi-county local workforce development areas are considered to be regions for the purposes of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act planning. Any local workforce development area that is smaller than two counties will be part of a region for WIOA planning purposes with the local workforce development area(s) that closely aligns with the region's economic development planning district or metropolitan statistical area.

Local boards and chief elected officials were consulted during the formation of both the local workforce development areas and regions. The opportunity for public comment was also provided and many chief elected officials provided positive comments in support of the structure.

For purposes of appeal, a unit of general local government (including a combination of such units) or grant recipient that requests but is not granted designation of an area as a local area may submit an appeal to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board under an appeal process established in the State plan. If the appeal does not result in such a designation, the Secretary of Labor, after receiving a request for review from the unit or grant recipient and on determining that the unit or grant recipient was not accorded procedural rights under the appeals process described in the State plan, may require that the area be designated as a local area.

All appeals for reconsideration of local workforce development area designation should be submitted to the following address:

Arkansas Workforce Development Board Attn: Appeal/Grievance Review P.O. Box 2981 Little Rock, Arkansas 72202

Infrastructure costs (facility and/or shared costs) are determined by either using a Local Funding Mechanism (LFM) or a State Funding Mechanism (SFM). To-date there have been no appeals from any core and required partners.

In the event that the LFM has not been completed, signed, and submitted to the State, the State will be statutorily compelled to impose a SFM as prescribed by WIOA sec. 121(h) and the Final Rules in 20 CFR Part 678. The specific allocations in this mechanism will be transmitted to the LWDB, the CEO, and the One-Stop Required Partners.

Should any appeals arise as a result of the imposition of the SFM, ADWS will follow the SFM-specific appeals process described below:

1. Upon receipt of the specific terms of a State infrastructure cost-allocation mechanism, any local WDB or One-Stop required partner may appeal for cause, within 21 calendar days, in writing (electronic or hardcopy) the State's determination regarding the portion of funds (or non-cash contributions) the Local WDB or required partner is to provide.

2. To be officially submitted, an official appeal letter must be sent to the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Director and must fully contain evidence of the following:
  - An introduction identifying the appellant and designating the letter as a formal appeal
  - Full citations from WIOA or the WIOA Final Rules in Title 29 or Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations that support the appeal.
  - Identify the basis for the appeal.

The appeal must be in writing (electronic or hardcopy) and addressed to the attention of:

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

Agency Director

P. O . Box 2981

Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Director will acknowledge receipt of the appeal and submit the appeal to the Arkansas Appeals Tribunal, P.O. Box 8013, Little Rock, AR 72203. The Arkansas Appeals Tribunal will provide the appellant an opportunity present their case. A determination will be made as quickly as feasible. Until the appeals process is completed, the appellant will remain liable for its contribution as originally determined in the SFM. If a One-Stop partner's appeal to the imposition of the SFM is successful and results in a change to the One-Stop partner's infrastructure-cost contributions, then the Local Workforce Area MOU must be updated to reflect the final One-Stop partner infrastructure-cost contributions.

## 2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

All policies for use by local workforce development boards in administration of WIOA Title I programs and for information on statewide activity programs are posted online on the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services website at [www.dws.arkansas.gov/wioa.htm](http://www.dws.arkansas.gov/wioa.htm).

State Funds are used for the following required and allowable activities:

Conducting Evaluations, Maintaining all the Eligible Training Providers Lists, Providing Assistance to Local Areas for Coordination Activities, Maintaining Fiscal and Case Management Information Systems, Conducting Monitoring and Oversight, Providing Assistance to Local Areas with High Concentrations of Eligible Youth, Providing funding for Rapid Response Activities, Providing Assistance for Carrying out State Plan activities (Business Outreach Strategies, Outreach to Jobseekers, Skills Gap Analysis, Asset Mapping), Assistance to Local Areas for Regional Planning and Sector Strategy Development, Assistance to Local Areas to Provide Opportunities for Individuals with Barriers to Employment to Enter In-Demand Industry Sectors, Disseminating Labor Market Information, Coordination with Economic Development, Developing Common Intake for Partners, Funding Innovative Programs for Employers, and Funding Administrative Costs.

The State launched the Arkansas Work-Based Learning Program (WBLP) utilizing Governor's set-aside funding. This program was initially designed to meet the needs of Arkansas businesses, provide job opportunities and training to populations with barriers to employment, and to increase the diversity and quality of training methods in Arkansas. The State WBLP can

be a potential option to assist as a layoff aversion strategy to maintain incumbent worker employment.

Arkansas's Division of Workforce Services Rapid Response protocols are designed to address adverse economic and / or community impacts resulting from actual or imminent natural or manmade crisis or disaster. These protocols include maintaining communications, close coordination and establishment of appropriate partnership arrangements with other entities and resources, including FEMA if necessitated by the situation. Protocols also dictate appropriate oversight arrangements to ensure requisite scope, design speed, monitoring and supervision of emergency operations.

Rapid Response partners with government agencies and with disaster response entities to ensure it fulfills its obligation to deliver services and transition workers to new employment as quickly as possible. In the event of a disaster, Rapid Response will utilize its partnerships with Emergency management organizations (i.e., state emergency management agencies and FEMA); Chief Elected Officials (CEO); Chambers of Commerce; Economic development organizations; Labor and industry organizations; USDOL, to stay on top of the events as they occur to make sure we are in place to assist areas and workers affected by disaster. In addition, partnerships are in place with the Arkansas Workforce Centers and local workforce development boards. Rapid Response is a key convener to plan a state's response to a disaster and has a role in the delivery of reemployment and transition services to those impacted by a disaster.

Rapid Response will ensure the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services website is updated with needed information, and the team will secure access for affected areas to utilize Mobile Workforce Centers that are ready to be deployed when needed. These units can assist with communications, emergency unemployment, insurance claim assistance, etc. These preparations, combined with flexibility and creativity in responding to the truly unexpected events of a disaster, allow Rapid Response to quickly and effectively respond to major events.

As stated above, Mobile Workforce Centers are part of Rapid Response's resources; the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services maintains a fleet of Mobile Workforce Centers consisting of three RV style vehicles and two 5th wheel trailers which are supported by a 2008 Ford F-350 Pickup. The Mobile Centers contain multiple computer stations (with full internet connectivity), public announcement systems, printers, copiers and fax machines. These units are also equipped with flat-televisions, DVD/VCR players, Smart-boards, JAWS (Jobs Application with Speech) software for visually impaired jobseekers and are handicap accessible. These units supplement local office resources, support opportunity and job fairs, promote employer hiring initiatives and facilitate numerous training endeavors designed to assist jobseekers across the state. Additionally, the Mobile Centers have been utilized for Rapid Response Worker Transition Centers. The Mobile Workforce Centers have become very popular at various Community Outreach events and have been deployed several times to aid in disaster response initiatives both in Arkansas and in neighboring states. These units have been identified as an asset for natural disaster response by the State Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM).

Arkansas's Rapid Response protocols and the partnership with the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program have been recognized by Department of Labor.

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- If there is the slightest possibility that reduction in workforce is trade affected the necessary info is gathered by Rapid Response personnel and a petition is submitted to the DOL;
- Once DOL issues a petition number Rapid Response notifies the Company representatives and TAA staff;
- Petition progress is monitored by both Rapid Response and Trade Program staff on the DOL website;
- Upon Certification, If the Company is unwilling or unable to provide a workers list then UI data is engaged to establish eligibility for workers;
- Trade Program staff prepares Eligibility Letters which are mailed to every client listed on the workers list (workers list vetted through Rapid Response). Notices of Eligibility may also be placed in local newspapers of general circulation;
- TAA Information Sessions are scheduled and invitation letters are mailed to eligible clients. The purpose of these Information Sessions is to meet with the dislocated workers and convey information about the benefits for which they may be eligible along with important timelines and information on other supportive services that may be available to them.

Arkansas's Rapid Response will continue to utilize its allocated funding to provide services to all companies experiencing a workforce reduction and affected workers including those for whom a Trade Petition is filed with the U.S. DOL. These services include Worker Assistance Workshops, Transition Assistance, Referral Services and Trade Petition preparation and submission. During the DOL's investigation process, Rapid Response serves as the primary point of contact pending certification, at which time Trade Program staff is engaged and continue to partner with Rapid Response staff to facilitate provision of services to identified workers.

ADWS' Rapid Response Unit developed and maintains a Rapid Response Tracking System (RRTS) which is used by Agency personnel to monitor and track all dislocation events including certification status of Companies for whom a Trade Petition was submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor.

## B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### 1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

Arkansas' WIOA I-B - 5.1, Work-Based Learning Program Policy and Issuance PY18-07 provide guidance to Local Boards. To date, Arkansas has implemented the following WBLs:

- Little Rock Local Workforce Board and Our House Project
- Little Rock Local Workforce Board and Essick Air Products

- Northeast Arkansas Local Workforce Board

## 2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) has a strong partnership with Registered Apprenticeship (RA) and consistently includes Registered Apprenticeship training as a training option in discretionary grant proposals and encourages local workforce development boards to utilize RA as a workforce development tool serving both employers and job seekers. The ADWS is working with local workforce development boards to more fully integrate RA and other work-based learning options into WIOA Title I.

Under the USDOL awarded ApprenticeshipUSA State Accelerator grant, ADWS is working with RA partners and stakeholders to develop a State Plan for RA Expansion and Diversification. A major component in the development of the State Plan for RA Expansion and Diversification includes an asset mapping analysis that will identify assets and funding streams associated with RA and look for opportunities to leverage resources for potential expansion to serve both employers and job seekers within growth industry and occupational fields. The State Plan for RA Expansion and Diversification is due to be completed by May 31, 2018.

Information on RA is shared with dislocated workers that attend information sessions while preparing for or recovering from a layoff. Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) staff routinely notify TAA eligible clients of the option to pursue RA as a viable training option. Registered Apprenticeships are presented to clients as a training option at both the TAA Information Sessions and during one-on-one assessments. If a client expresses interest in an Apprenticeship program, they are provided with the appropriate RA program contact information for follow-up purposes to learn more about RA training and employment opportunities.

The partnership between the Workforce system and RA programs will serve to increase options for both youth and adults. The RA “earn while you learn” model provides job seekers with a USDOL recognized skill attainment credential while allowing for an upwardly mobile career pathway. Likewise, RA benefits employers by developing highly skilled employees, reducing turnover rates, increasing productivity, and lowering the cost employee recruitment efforts. Adults, dislocated workers and youth have opportunities under RA to increase their earnings, skill sets, and will receive training in a high demand industry. Apprentices in Arkansas Registered Apprenticeships are co-enrolled in Title-I programs, when appropriate. ITAs and supportive services will be provided as wrap around support to participants in Registered Apprenticeships. On-the-Job-Training (OJT) contracts may be written with registered apprenticeship providers for the training portion of the program. Registered Apprenticeship program, OJT contracts must follow the State and local policies on OJT and depending on the length of the program, these funds may cover some or all of the registered apprenticeship training. Attainment of a credential, employment, retention of employment and wages of apprentices will be counted in performance measures for those who meet program eligibility requirements.

The Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathway Initiative (AAPI) provides \$4,000,000 of grant funds from the U.S. Department of Labor to create and expand registered apprenticeships in targeted H-1B growth industries, strengthen employer and service provider partnerships, as well as provide an opportunity for participants to learn occupational specific skills as well as good wages while gaining college credit.

The industries of focus for this grant include advanced manufacturing and the construction trades with opportunities for expansion into other industry growth sectors based on employer

demand. A primary goal under the AAPI is to enroll 600 RA's over the life the grant. The grant has an end date of September 30, 2020.

Arkansas Expands Apprenticeship (AREA) provides \$900,000 of grant funds from the U.S. Department of Labor to create, expand, and diversify registered apprenticeships in growth industries. The industries of focus for this grant include advanced manufacturing, construction trades, and transportation with opportunities for expansion into other industry growth sectors based on employer demand. A primary goal under the AREA is to enroll 100 RA's and 100 pre-apprentices over the life the grant. The grant has an end date of April 30, 2019.

### 3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

#### **Eligible Training Provider Initial Eligibility Certification Procedure**

##### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the certification process for new eligible training providers in accordance with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

##### **Reference:**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Section 122.

##### **Procedure:**

To be included on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), providers must submit an electronic application to the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) for the area where they wish to provide training services. A separate electronic application must be submitted for each training program. Also, if applying for a training program to be offered at different training locations, a separate electronic application is required for each training location. Each training program must be on the current *Projected Employment Opportunities List*.

Providers who may apply to be included on the ETPL include:

- An institution of higher education that provides a program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential;
- Another public or private provider of a program of training services, which may include joint labor-management organizations, and eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities, if such activities are provided in combination with occupational skills training. These providers must have all appropriate licenses to operate in the State of Arkansas and will be required to submit copies of such licenses. The information will then be verified by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS).

An entity that carries out programs under the National Apprenticeship Act will be included and maintained on the ETPL for so long as their program remains registered. These providers will be required to contact ADWS to make known their desire to be listed and provide documentation that verifies their program is a registered apprenticeship program certified by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship.

The first step of the process is to determine if a provider is qualified to apply using initial eligibility status. All provider/program combinations that have not been previously eligible under WIOA Section 122 or the Workforce Investment Act Section 122 may apply under these rules.

### **Projected Employment Opportunities:**

All training must be directly linked to employment opportunities either in the local area or in an area to which the individual is willing to relocate. If a local area does not have a particular occupation on its projected employment opportunities list, they may send a participant to, or a customer may choose, a training provider/program not approved by their LWDB if that participant agrees in writing that s/he would be willing to relocate or commute to become employed in that occupation.

An occupation is considered an employment opportunity for a local area if it appears on the *Projected Employment Opportunities List* for the State or local area as published by the Labor Market Information (LMI) division of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services. Occupations on an adjacent local area's list, including local areas in other states, may also be considered employment opportunities in the local area. If a local area would like to train in an occupation that is not on their local area's projected employment opportunities list, but is on the list of an adjacent area, they should contact the Labor Market Information division of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services to have the occupation added within the Arkansas Consumer Report System web site. For local areas in other states, the LWDB must provide the adjacent area's projected employment opportunities list, along with the adjacent state's contact information and the training occupations before the occupations can be added to the Arkansas Consumer Report System.

In an effort to increase access to training for rural areas, training providers may be classroom based, online based, or outside of the state. Providers of all types are required to meet the same eligibility and performance criteria. A provider must be in statutory compliance with Arkansas laws in relation to operation as a training education institution.

### **Required Information for Initial Eligibility:**

The information to be included on the initial application is described below.

1. A description of the training program to be offered including the costs of tuition, books and fees.
2. The program completion rate for **all** individuals participating in the applicable program to be offered by the provider.

**To calculate:** The number of all participants who completed the program/course during the reporting period divided by the total number of all participants.

3. If the training provider is in a partnership with business/industry and an explanation of the partnership.
4. If the training program leads to a recognized postsecondary credential and a description of the credential.
5. If the program aligns with in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

### **The Initial Eligibility Certification Process:**

1. Providers eligible to apply under this section will complete an online electronic application for "initial certification" through the automated Arkansas Consumer Report System (ACRS) located at **[www.arkansascrs.org](http://www.arkansascrs.org)**. Providers must apply for each individual program. If multiple training locations exist, an application must be made for **each location**. Providers may make application to any or all Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) at the same time.

2. The LWDBs will receive the application via Internet file if (1) The program's CIP Code appears on the current *Projected Employment Opportunities List* for the State or Local Workforce Development Area, and (2) Required items are complete and meet minimum qualifications.

3. The LWDB will electronically approve or disapprove each application received via the Internet. The LWDB is responsible for ensuring that the provider's performance information meets or exceeds the State minimum levels.

4. Upon approval by the LWDB, the provider will be automatically placed on the ACRS website as a WIOA Eligible Training Provider for the applicable program.

If the training provider does not have performance data because the training program is a new program, then the provider must submit the following information to the LWDB of application to include:

1. Written justification for the missing data, and
2. The process that will be used to track and record the required information for re-certification.

The LWDB may choose to waive the performance documentation requirement in this situation. The LWDB should submit in writing their intentions to do so to the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services LMI division for processing of the application to continue.

**Required Information for Continued Eligibility:**

The information to be included on the continued application is described below.

1. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program
2. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program
3. The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program
4. The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program
5. Information on cost of attendance, including cost of tuition and fees, for program participants
6. Information on the program completion rate for program participants
7. A description of how the provider provides access to training services, including to rural areas, including the use of technology
8. A description of the degree to which training program(s) align with in-demand industries and occupations in the State, as identified in State and Local Plans
9. Any applicable state licensure requirements of training providers
10. A description of training provider's ability to offer industry-recognized certificates and/or credentials through the program



11. A description of training provider's ability to offer programs that lead to post-secondary credentials
12. A description of the quality of the program of training services including a program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential
13. A description of the ability of the providers to provide training services that are physically and programmatically accessible for individuals who are employed and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities
14. The timeliness and accuracy of the eligible training provider's performance reports
15. Relevant information reported to State agencies on Federal and State training programs other than programs within WIOA Title I.

While we do not intend to limit customer choice nor decrease the number of available training providers, we will prioritize certain individual criteria elements listed above during our evaluation for continued eligibility. Our primary focus will be placed upon the WIOA performance criteria, Numbers 1-4, followed by criteria Numbers 5-8. The remaining criteria elements will be given no special emphasis.

#### **The Continued Eligibility Certification Process:**

1. Providers eligible to apply under this section will complete an online electronic application for "continued certification" through the automated Arkansas Consumer Report System (ACRS) located at <https://www.workforce.arkansas.gov/acrs/>. Providers must apply for each individual program. If multiple training locations exist, an application must be made for each location. Providers may make application to any or all Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) at the same time.
2. The LWDBs will receive the application via Internet file if (1) The program's CIP Code appears on the current Projected Employment Opportunities List for the State or Local Workforce Development Area, and (2) Required items are complete and meet minimum qualifications.
3. The LWDB will electronically approve or disapprove each application received via the Internet. The LWDB is responsible for ensuring that the provider's performance information meets or exceeds the State minimum levels.
4. Upon approval by the LWDB, the provider will be automatically placed on the ACRS website as a WIOA Eligible Training Provider for the applicable program.

#### **Substantial Violation**

Under WIOA, an institution commits a substantial violation when it: (1) fails to meet the state's procedure for timely and accurately submitting required information for annual ETP performance reporting, (2) fails to meet the state's procedure for timely and accurately submitting all required information for initial or continued eligibility, (3) intentionally provides false information, or (4) violates any provision of WIOA Title I or its regulations, including the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions. provisions.

The State will take into account exceptional circumstances beyond the institution's control (e.g., natural disasters, unexpected personnel transitions, and unexpected technology-related issues) when determining if an institution committed a substantial violation for failing to timely and

accurately submit required information. If it is determined that exceptional circumstances existed, then a substantial violation did not occur. If it is determined that an institution committed a substantial violation, the institution is prohibited from having its programs on the published ETPL for a minimum of two years and it is liable to repay any WIOA Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Program funds it received during the period of noncompliance.

### **Registered Apprenticeship Programs**

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs are an exception to the initial and continued eligibility certification processes. They are exempt from performance and reporting-related requirements. These programs have already gone through a rigorous assessment as part of the registration process with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship (DOLETA/OA). Inclusion of RA programs on the state Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) enhances participants' awareness of the programs and provides local workforce systems with a mechanism to support this valuable training model. All RA programs listed on the ETPL will automatically be considered as a statewide demand occupation for as long as they have an unfilled opening(s). Local boards may not require additional criteria of RA programs.

To be listed on the state ETPL, a RA program should complete the ACRS Registered Apprenticeship Form and return it to the Department of Workforce Services via mail, fax or email. The necessary contact information can be found on the bottom of the form. Once the completed form is received and reviewed for completeness, the RA program will be displayed on the Arkansas Consumer Report System (ACRS) website at:

<https://www.workforce.arkansas.gov/ACRS/ETPApPrenticeShipList.aspx>.

### **Notification and Appeal Procedures**

If a provider of training services has its eligibility denied, are terminated due to substantial violations, failure to provide requested performance information without reasonable justification, or otherwise are removed for good cause, the training provider will be notified that their training program is being removed from the State's training provider list. This information regarding the decision will be submitted to the contact person listed on the training provider's account.

The training provider may appeal the denial or termination within twenty(20) business days from the date of receipt of notice of termination by submitting an appeal request to the ADWS Office of Employment Assistance, P.O. Box 2981, Little Rock, Arkansas 72201 or [WIOA@arkansas.gov](mailto:WIOA@arkansas.gov).

The State will review the appeal, provide the opportunity for a hearing, and issue a written decision/response within thirty (30) business days of the receipt of the appeal. The appeal will be heard by the Arkansas Appeal Tribunal, P.O. Box 8013, Little Rock, AR 72203.

#### **4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE PRIORITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS, OTHER LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF WIOA SEC. 134(C)(3)(E), WHICH APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES FUNDED BY THE ADULT FORMULA PROGRAM**

The State adopted a policy, WIOA I-B-2.8 – Priority for Individuals with Barriers to Employment. This policy applies to the Adult Program’s individualized career services and training services. Each local area was required to develop policies and procedures to ensure priority access to services for individuals with barriers to employment. Local Areas may identify other populations who should be included as “individuals with barriers to employment” and include in their Local policy. The Local Policy must be approved by the Local Board.

#### 5. DESCRIBE THE STATE’S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

A local board may transfer, up to and including 100 percent of the funds allocated to the local area for a fiscal year between the adult employment and training activities and the dislocated worker employment and training activities. Under the Workforce Investment Act, the State had a waiver that increased the level of transfer between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams. The waiver provided greater flexibility in the design of local area adult and dislocated worker service delivery plans and enhanced the ability of local boards to respond to changing workforce and economic dynamics. Local boards were able to provide targeted assistance in response to customer needs.

In order to transfer funds between programs, the local workforce development board shall submit a funds transfer request to the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, stating the amount of the requested transfer, the percentage of funds the transfer represents, the reason for the transfer, and an assurance that adequate funds still remain in the contributing program to support existing and future enrollments. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, as the Governor’s Administrative Entity, will review the transfer request and issue a determination on the request.

#### C. WITH RESPECT TO YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED IN SECTION 129 OF WIOA—

##### 1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA IN AWARDING SUCH GRANTS OR CONTRACTS.[11]

Arkansas’s strategy for providing comprehensive services for youth calls for a collaborative approach with local boards to prepare youth for success in a global, demand-driven economy. The state will issue policy guidance regarding the competitive sub-grant award process for youth workforce investment activities. In an effort to meet the needs specific to the local area, local boards will develop a process of review to determine if providers are able to meet performance accountability measures based on the criteria below. Consequently, state monitors will review local area policies and processes so as to ensure compliance.

1. Vision, Mission and Philosophy
2. Management Plan
3. Financial Plan
4. Employer Services
5. Individual Customers

6. Marketing
7. Partner Coordination Service Plan
8. Site/Location Plan
9. Organizational Qualifications
10. Performance/Experience
11. Anticipated Program Deliverables
12. Anticipated Program Outcomes
13. Budget Procedures

**2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AS DESCRIBED IN 129(A)(1)(B), INCLUDING HOW IT WILL LEVERAGE AND ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE.**

In order to improve the outreach and recruitment of out-of-school youth, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and its divisions will partner with the Department of Human Services, and other community-based organizations to create a streamline pathway and align services to meet the needs of youth participants. Core programs will no longer serve out-of-school youth in siloes, but rather through a referral system leveraged within these partnerships. Local Workforce Development Boards will work with referrals of able bodied young adults in the SNAP Employment & Training sector of the Department of Human Services, juvenile offenders within the juvenile justice system, clients receiving housing assistance through the local housing authority agencies and community organizations assisting homeless youth to boost enrollment and performance in the out-of-school youth core programs. These partners may prove beneficial in addressing persons with identified and unidentified disabilities, high school equivalency credentials, leadership development and supportive service needs.

As part of the State's overarching outreach strategy, we will hire a Targeted Populations Advisor who will be solely devoted to developing our comprehensive outreach plan to reach certain populations, including Out-of-School youth.

**3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2) ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS UNDER THE WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM ELEMENT. [12]**

A state issued directive listing the 14 elements will require that all are made available to individuals in each local area. During their regular visits state monitors will review local policies, participant folders, conduct interviews with participants and staff, and review literature containing information relating to available services.

**4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE**

DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

The definition and requirements for the youth additional assistance high risk category are specific to the local area. A state issued directive will require each local area to establish a policy that is specific to their area of service that applies to the predominant population of youth within their service boundaries.

5. INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION, AS DEFINED IN LAW, FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AND ATTENDING SCHOOL AS SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(I) AND SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(I). IF STATE LAW DOES NOT DEFINE “NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL” OR “ATTENDING SCHOOL,” INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE AND PROVIDE THE STATE POLICY FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A YOUTH IS ATTENDING OR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL.

Mandatory school attendance is required for individuals between the age of five and 17. The statute requires enrollment in an approved school including private, public, parochial or home school that meets the requirements for legal operation. The individual must attend school each day the school is open unless:

- The child has received a high school diploma or its equivalent,
- A child 16 years of age or older who is enrolled in a post-secondary vocational-technical institution, a community college, or two-year or four-year institution of higher education, or
- Any child 16 years of age or older who is enrolled in an adult education program.

A specific definition for “not attending school” is not available other than an individual who does not comply with the above.

6. IF USING THE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION WHICH MUST FURTHER DEFINE HOW TO DETERMINE IF AN INDIVIDUAL IS UNABLE TO COMPUTE OR SOLVE PROBLEMS, OR READ, WRITE, OR SPEAK ENGLISH, AT A LEVEL NECESSARY TO FUNCTION ON THE JOB, IN THE INDIVIDUAL'S FAMILY, OR IN SOCIETY. IF NOT USING THE PORTION OF THE DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE.

**Arkansas defines “unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speaking English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society” as meeting one of the following conditions:**

- - **Unable to speak English well enough to conduct a normal conversation with or follow the instructions of an English-speaker**
  - **Unable to read English well enough to follow written instructions, including a manual or a recipe**
  - **Unable to read and write well enough to read and appropriately complete an application for services or an application for employment**
  - **Unable to pass a driver’s license test written in English**
  - **Unable to make change or determine if correct change was given from a clerk**

- **An adult who lacks the basic academic skills needed to obtain a job at above minimum wage, as evidenced by the adult's employment history**
- **A high-school dropout who had no education past the eighth grade**

#### D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)

2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)

3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

NOT APPLICABLE

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

NOT APPLICABLE

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

NOT APPLICABLE

6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.

NOT APPLICABLE

7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS. 107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.

NOT APPLICABLE

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

NOT APPLICABLE

#### E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

The State of Arkansas anticipates seeking a waiver after the full approval of the State's Medicaid Expansion Program, called Arkansas Works.

Arkansas Works provides health care coverage to Arkansans who are U.S. citizens and certain legally residing immigrants ages 19-64 with household incomes below 138 percent of the

Federal Poverty Level for their family size. If determined eligible for this program, individuals will be enrolled in either a Qualified Health Plan or Employer Sponsored Insurance (ESI). Medicaid will pay most or all of the premiums for the plan while the individual may be responsible for co-pays and a small part of the premium. If eligible, individuals may have a small co-pay for doctor visits, prescriptions and certain other medical services. All Arkansas Works Program recipients will be referred to the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services for free job assistance services.

## **WAIVER REQUEST 1**

### **Out-of-School Youth Expenditure Requirement**

ADWS is seeking a waiver of the requirement under WIOA §129(a)(4) and 20 CFR 681.410 that the state and local workforce areas spend not less than 75 percent of youth funds to provide services to out-of-school youth (OSY).

#### **2. Actions the State has taken to remove state or local barriers**

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers that would impede implementation of the requested waiver.

#### **3. State strategic goal(s) and Department of Labor priorities (e.g. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.) supported by the waiver**

This request is for a waiver to allow the state and all workforce areas in Arkansas the flexibility to direct up to 50 percent of youth funds to deliver workforce and educational services to ISY, while continuing to serve OSY as a priority population.

On September 20, 2018, DOLETA granted this same waiver request to Texas, reducing the OSY expenditure requirement from 75 percent to not less than 50 percent of youth funds. DOLETA authorized the waiver for WIOA program years 2018 and 2019 (July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2020).

While the provision of services to OSY is vital, the requirement to expend 75 percent of youth statewide and formula funds on OSY prohibits states and workforce areas from using discretion when serving youth based on state and local demographics, resources, economies, employment outlooks, and other labor market factors. The requirement also weakens Title I's ability to design and deliver meaningful career pathway programs to all youth, regardless of school status. The 75 percent OSY expenditure requirement limits state and local ability to carry out such initiatives that provide necessary educational and training experiences for students and that meet employer's workforce education and skills needs.

Reducing the OSY expenditure requirement to 50 percent and permitting flexibility to calculate OSY expenditures on a collective statewide basis, instead of per workforce area, would allow ADWS and Boards to continue serving the OSY population while also increasing their ability to meet the needs of ISY throughout the state in alignment with WIOA's intent by supporting career pathways and the preparation of young people for in-demand careers in the workforce, regardless of a youth's school status. Under this waiver, Boards would continue to serve OSY as a priority population and track OSY services, expenditures, and performance metrics.

Approval of this waiver request would allow ADWS to meet the following state goals:

- **Serve youth regardless of school status:** Allow Boards flexibility to increase spending on providing education and training to ISY would not only increase the workforce opportunities available to all youth, but also help prevent at-risk ISY from dropping out of school or not pursuing additional education and training that would lead to meaningful work and economic self-sufficiency.
- **Serve ISY in rural communities:** Help ISY living in rural workforce areas overcome the unique economic and employment challenges facing rural—and often remote—Arkansas communities.
- **Serve youth according to local and statewide need:** Provide local- and state-level flexibility to serve OSY and ISY in a way that best meets each workforce area's needs according to population, resources, economy, employment outlook, and other labor market factors.
- **Continue serving out-of-school youth as a priority population:** ADWS and Boards will continue to give priority of service to OSY and achieve any OSY expenditure target authorized by DOLETA through this waiver request.

This waiver request aligns with DOL's policy priorities in that it:

- focuses on ensuring that eligible youth achieve secondary and postsecondary educational success;
- increases youths' access to and opportunities for the education, training, employment, and support services that they need;
- aligns with WIOA's intent by supporting career pathways and the preparation of young people for in-demand careers; and ensures that ISY do not fall into an at-risk category because of expenditure restrictions.

#### **4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver**

Approval of this waiver would permit Boards the opportunity to determine how best to meet the educational and training needs of youth, regardless of school status, and specific to the population, geographical location, and economic and employment conditions of each workforce area. Increasing outreach to ISY while maintaining a focus on serving OSY will help develop a larger pool of young people qualified and prepared to meet the current and future needs of employers in their workforce areas and throughout the state.

#### **5. Individuals, groups, or populations benefiting from the waiver**

- At-risk ISY statewide who face barriers to education, training, and employment
- OSY because they will continue to be served as a priority population in accordance with WIOA
- Boards through increased flexibility to develop unique solutions to better serve youth according to local conditions and needs

#### **6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**



Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, ADWS will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. ADWS will monitor progress under this waiver by reviewing monthly performance reports submitted by the Boards, through regularly scheduled meetings with Board executive directors, and through its monitoring and performance accountability system. ADWS will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report.

## **7. Assurance of State's posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected Local Workforce Development Boards**

ADWS will include this waiver request as part of the agency's PT2020-2023 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment. ADWS has notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

## **WAIVER REQUEST 2**

### **Eligible Training Providers Performance Reporting Requirements**

#### **1. The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the State would like to waive**

ADWS is seeking a waiver of WIOA §116(d)(4) and 20 CFR §677.230(a)(5) in order to allow eligible training providers (ETPs) to collect and report performance data for WIOA-funded participants only.

#### **2. Actions the State has taken to remove state or local barriers**

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers that would impede implementation of the requested waiver.

#### **3. State strategic goal(s) and Department of Labor priorities (e.g. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.) supported by the waiver**

Under WIOA §116(d)(4)(A) and 20 CFR §677.230(a)(5), ETPs must report performance data with respect to all individuals engaging in a program of study (or the equivalent). While ADWS recognizes the value and importance of monitoring provider performance, requiring ETPs to produce data on all individuals instead of just WIOA-funded participants places an undue burden on ETPs to collect, enter, and report excessive data. This is especially burdensome when ETPs have many students of whom only a small percentage are WIOA participants. DOL and ED acknowledge this burden in their response to comments regarding 20 CFR §677.230 in the preamble to the WIOA Final Rule by stating, "The Departments are cognizant of the reporting burden the ETP performance report places on ETPs and do not want to place additional burden on these entities," yet did not modify the regulatory text to ease that burden.

Further, ETPs and ADWS are concerned that providing data—including Social Security numbers—on all individuals engaging in a program of study (or the equivalent) instead of WIOA-funded participants only may conflict with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which protects the privacy of student education records. Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student to release any information from a student's education record (34 CFR §99.30). Releasing student information on individuals who are not workforce system participants without their explicit consent may be in violation of federal law and compromise their personally identifiable information (PII) and potentially make those students vulnerable to identity theft and privacy risks.

Burdensome reporting requirements combined with mandatory submission of PII for non-WIOA-funded participants disincentivizes training providers from participating or remaining in

the ETP system. A shortage of participating providers could result in limited customer choice locally or even statewide.

Under this waiver, ETPs will continue to collect and report performance data for all WIOA-funded participants in accordance with WIOA §116(d)(4)(A) and as specified at 20 CFR §677.230.

Approval of this waiver request would allow ADWS to meet the following state goals:

- - **Ease undue reporting burden on ETPs:** Reporting performance data on all individuals engaging in a program of study (or the equivalent) consumes considerable time and expense. Reducing ETPs' reporting requirements to include only WIOA-funded participants would save considerable time and expense to allow ETPs to focus on education and training outcomes while still providing the required data on WIOA-funded participants.
  - **Ensure protection of non-WIOA participants' PII:** Not reporting data for individuals who are not WIOA participants would reduce ETPs' liability for potential breach of those individuals' PII.
  - **Ensure that local areas have sufficient numbers of and diversity of training providers:** Establishing a more provider-friendly system will help ensure that local areas have sufficient numbers of and diversity of training providers necessary to create an effective marketplace of training programs for WIOA participants utilizing ITAs.
  - **Incentivize training providers to participate in the ETP system:** Minimizing the reporting burden and eliminating the need to provide sensitive data on non-WIOA-funded students would make ETP participation more attractive to training providers and would therefore help increase the number of new ETPs and retain providers that are already participating in the ETP system.
  - **Ensure accuracy of performance data:** Eliminating reporting barriers and limiting reporting to only WIOA-funded participants would result in more consistent and more accurate provider performance data.
  - **Maximize customer choice:** A provider friendly ETP system attracts more training providers, resulting in increased customer choice.
- This waiver request aligns with DOL's policy priorities in that it:
  - connects education and training strategies by reducing the reporting burden on ETPs, thus allowing them to focus more time and resources on producing successful outcomes for WIOA-funded participants; and
  - further protects the privacy rights of ETPs' students who are not WIOA participants.

#### 4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver

Approval of this waiver would reduce the reporting burden on ETPs and allow them to focus more time and resources on producing successful outcomes for WIOA-funded participants as well as for their non-WIOA students.

## **5. Individuals, groups, or populations benefiting from the waiver**

- Eligible training providers

## **6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

Upon DOL's continued approval of this waiver request, ADWS will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. ADWS will monitor progress under this waiver by continuing to collect data from ETPs on their WIOA-funded students and to submit that data via ADWS's annual report to DOL. ADWS will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then TWC will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

## **7. Assurance of State's posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected Local Workforce Development Boards**

ADWS will include this waiver request as part of the agency's PT2020-2023 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment. ADWS has notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

### **Waiver Impact**

Through this waiver, ETPs will be more willing to submit data on their WIOA-funded students and to remain in the ETP program, thus allowing the Arkansas workforce system to continue delivering essential training services that meet the needs of employers, job seekers, and workers.

## **WAIVER REQUEST 3**

### **Waiver to increase on-the-job-training reimbursement up to 90 percent for businesses with 50 or fewer employees. WIOA Section 134(c) (3)(H)(i) and 20 CFR 680.720 (b)**

Arkansas is requesting a waiver to the current allowable employer reimbursement rate of up to 50 percent of the wage rate of the On-the-Job-Training (OJT) participant for the extraordinary costs of providing training and additional supervision related to the OJT as described in the WIOA Section 134(c) (3)(H)(ii). The waiver request has been developed following the WIOA guidelines in Section 189 (i)(3)(B) and the WIOA Federal regulation at 20 CFR 680.720(b).

Arkansas is proposing a sliding scale of reimbursement to the employer based on its size and capability. Under this waiver, the following scale will be implemented: up to 90% reimbursement for employers with 50 or less employees; up to 75% reimbursement for employers with a workforce between 51 and 250 employees. For employers with 251 employees or more, the statutorily defined 50% limit will continue to apply.

The waiver is requested for all WIOA formula funds: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, National Dislocated Worker Grants, as well as other Discretionary grants, as appropriate.

### **1. The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the State would like to waive**

ADWS is seeking a waiver of the requirement under WIOA Section 134(c) (3)(H)(ii)(II) and the accompanying regulations as promulgated at 20 CFR 680.720 (b) state that employers may be

reimbursed up to 50 percent of the wage rate of an OJT participant for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and additional supervision related to the OJT.

## **2. Actions the State has taken to remove state or local barriers**

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers that would impede implementation of the requested waiver.

## **3. Description of the waiver goals; relationship of goals to the strategic plan goals; and expected programmatic outcomes:**

The waiver is consistent with national policy to develop a workforce system that is responsive to the demands of both individual and employer customers. The State anticipates the following goals will be achieved with approval of the waiver request:

- Maximize the flexibility needed to impact local economic vitality and direct resources where demand for services is greatest by assisting local areas in marketing OJT as a vehicle to engage employers, particularly in targeted sectors, to hire and provide training to new workers. This will build the capacity and future viability of both the workforce and the industries themselves.
- Assist with the transformation of the current workforce system to a demand-driven, sector based and regionally driven talent development pipeline.
- Increase training and transitional employment opportunities for unemployed workers and hard-to-serve youth and adults.
- Equip individuals with relevant job training and transferable skills in high-skill, high-wage, high demand occupations and industries.
- Increase business usage of the local workforce system by providing added incentives to hire and train new workers.

Local workforce development boards have provided feedback with regard to employer needs for assistance with economic competitiveness in the current economic downturn. Allowing businesses to be reimbursed on a sliding scale will address the primary reason for prior limited use of OJT and increase employer participation.

Employer feedback indicates that they will be more likely to use this opportunity

if reimbursement was greater than 50%. Small to medium-sized employers are responsible for the majority of all the jobs in Arkansas, therefore the State estimates that small to medium-sized employers will comprise a significant percentage of OJT opportunities.

## **4**

Approval of this waiver would increase the opportunity to utilize the OJT model to hire and train new workers.

5.

The need for training is especially acute for those workers most in need: dislocated workers transitioning to new occupations and industries, long-term unemployed individuals in need of advancing outmoded skills in order to catch up with emerging technologies, and low-income and entry-level workers seeking to start their careers in a weak economic climate. Approval of the waiver will increase training options

for WIOA-eligible job seekers.

The reduced match requirement for employers, particularly new start-ups and other small to medium-sized businesses, will provide an attractive and cost-effective financial incentive. This waiver will allow Arkansas businesses to more rapidly adapt to both technological and general marketplace changes by improving their capacity to expand and remain competitive with affordable OJT options uniquely designed to

achieve their specific developmental goals.

#### **6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

-

Upon DOL's continued approval of this waiver request, ADWS will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. ADWS will monitor progress under this waiver and to submit that data via ADWS's annual report to DOL.

#### **7. Description of the process used to: Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment from business and labor; provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver; provide affected local boards the opportunity to comment; and monitor implementation:**

ADWS will include this waiver request as part of the agency's PT2020-2023 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment. ADWS has notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

#### **WAIVER REQUEST 4**

**Waiver to allow flexibility in the use of funds reserved by the Governor to provide disaster relief as permitted under Dislocated Worker Grants for disaster relief, including temporary work. WIOA Section 134(a)(2)(A), WIOA Section 134(a)(2)(B) and WIOA Section 134(a)(3)**

##### **1. The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the State would like to waive**

Arkansas requests a waiver of WIOA Section 134(a)(2)(A), (2)(B), and (3) to add flexibility in the use of the funds reserved by the Governor for use to provide statewide rapid response

activities, for use to provide statewide employment and training activities, and to underwrite or fund disaster relief to affected areas of pending National Dislocated Worker Grants.

Under this allowance, Governor's funds would only be used to fund temporary cleanup efforts and will only be made available to local areas impacted under a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declaration. Governor's funds allotted to local areas under this waiver, who are subsequently awarded funds under the pending National Dislocated Worker Grants application, will refund the Governor's discretionary funds.

The purpose of this waiver request is to expedite the delivery of temporary cleanup resources and will be limited to one \$200,000 allotment, per Local Area, per qualifying event.

1.

**a. Actions undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers**

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing any of the requested waivers.

1.

**a. State strategic goal(s) and Department of Labor priorities (e.g. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.) supported by the waiver**

This request is for a waiver will provide local workforce areas in Arkansas the flexibility to more quickly implement cleanup efforts while awaiting the final approval of subsequently awarded funds under the pending National Dislocated Worker Grants application

**4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver**

Approval of this waiver would greatly enhance local workforce areas' ability to address emergency situations swiftly that negatively impact Arkansans suffering from disasters.

**5. Description of the individuals impacted by the waivers:**

This waiver would benefit those workers most in need, dislocated workers, as well as the general citizenry of the geographical areas that are negatively impacted by disasters.

**6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

-

Upon DOL's continued approval of this waiver request, ADWS will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. ADWS will monitor progress under this waiver and to submit that data via ADWS's annual report to DOL.

**7. Description of the process used to: Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment from business and labor; provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver; provide affected local boards the opportunity to comment; and monitor implementation:**

ADWS will include this waiver request as part of the agency's PT2020-2023 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment. ADWS has notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

#### TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

#### ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	82.0	87.0	82.0	87.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	77.0	87.0	77.0	87.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	5,653.00	6,200.00	5,653.00	6,200.00
Credential Attainment Rate	66.8	82.0	66.8	82.0
Measurable Skill Gains	72.1	72.1	72.1	72.1
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.*

#### DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	81.9	91.0	81.9	91.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	77.0	89.0	77.0	89.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6,300.00	6,900.00	6,300.00	6,900.00
Credential Attainment Rate	68.5	79.0	68.5	79.0
Measurable Skill Gains	70.2	70.2	70.2	70.2
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.*

#### YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	67.5	80.0	67.5	80.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	70.3	80.0	70.3	80.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	3,024.47	3,024.00	3,024.47	3,024.00
Credential Attainment Rate	67.5	73.0	67.5	73.0
Measurable Skill Gains	61.0	61.0	61.0	61.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

1

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.*

## PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

### A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

#### 1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

As the Wagner-Peyser agency for Arkansas, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has historically utilized state merit staff employees to provide labor exchange services. In the future, the Agency may decide to implement other available options.

#### 2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

The state uses professional development activities for Employment Services staff such as targeted training activities to cross-train in specific program areas (Veterans and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Unemployment Insurance) to ensure staff is able to provide quality services to both jobseekers and employers. These training activities enable staff to assist jobseekers with knowing and improving their skills, obtaining the best job possible, and progressing in a career pathway. Staff has been provided with the required information about programs and hear a consistent message regarding expected levels of performance, service delivery and service quality. Training is provided throughout the state to promote consistency.

#### 3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING

## PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

In contrast to most states, Arkansas continues to maintain unemployment insurance staff members in each of the State's workforce centers. The continuing presence of unemployment insurance staff members in local workforce centers enables ADWS to be poised to provide in-depth assistance to UI claimants and its workforce partners. UI Administration continues to utilize the UI Technical Unit to provide staff training to unemployment insurance staff. UI Technical provides necessary training to Employment Services and WIOA staff concerning general concepts related to the unemployment insurance program and potential issue identification.

### B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE

The presence of UI staff in all of ADWS' local offices significantly lessens the need to rely on Employment Service and WIOA staff to provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals seeking to file unemployment compensation claims through the one-stop centers. However, UI Technical provides basic training to Employment Services and WIOA staff to enable them to provide basic information and meaningful assistance to UI claimants. Furthermore, the interconnectivity of the electronic interface that exists between the UI data system and the Wagner- Peyser data system enable the immediate registration of UI claimants to register and apply for jobs through the Arkansas JobLink system.

### C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

The Arkansas Reemployment Services (RES) program uses claimant demographic data to mathematically identify Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants that are most at risk of exhausting benefits before finding employment. The Division of Workforce Services, through the Arkansas Workforce Centers, provides additional assistance to these participants, and requires completion of a job search workshop to maintain their UI benefits. The goal of the program is to keep these claimants from exhausting their benefits before they move on to gainful employment.

A job search workshop that lasts four to six hours is held once a month in each of the workforce centers that handle unemployment insurance claims. The workshop provides:

- - An orientation to the Arkansas Workforce Center system
- - Partner Program Information
  - An overview of program requirements
  - Labor market information
  - Career Readiness Certification information
  - Job search assistance

- Proper resume and application preparation
- Interviewing skills information Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program. The RESEA program enhances the current RES process by removing barriers to employment for those receiving UI benefits, including transitioning veterans receiving UI compensation for ex-service members to assist them in reentering the workforce more quickly. The RESEA program requires additional services for selected claimants to maintain benefits including the Career Readiness Certificate, an occupational skills assessment and an individual reemployment plan contract.

The goal of the RESEA program is not only to keep claimants from exhausting their benefits before moving on to employment, but also to reduce the number of weeks claimed and to reduce the total benefits paid to result in a new savings for the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. Additional requirements for the RESEA program include:

One-on-one assessment appointments to assist with:

- Resume creation and review
- Job search techniques
- Proper application completion
- Interview skills and techniques
- 
- 
- 
- Basic skills testing utilizing Career Ready 101 online curriculum as a first step to obtain a Career Readiness Certificate

Presently we have five RESEA locations throughout the state.

**D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:**

Currently claimants who file initial, additional or reopened claims for unemployment insurance benefits through ADWS' EZARC system simultaneously create registrations through the Arkansas Job Link "AJL" system. Once registered, jobseekers have access to all of the online features, such as searching for jobs, identifying employment occupational information, using the virtual recruiter to automatically receive alerts of new jobs that match the job skills in their resume, and having the resume viewable by employers registered in the system.

Per Ark. Code Ann. 11-10-507 and Regulation 14, claimants who file initial, additional or reopened claims for unemployment insurance benefits through ADWS' EZARC system simultaneously create registrations through the Arkansas Job Link "AJL" system. The filing of an initial, additional or reopened claim for unemployment insurance benefits through ADWS' EZARC system creates a unique "AJL" registration for all applicants. These registrations are then monitored and utilized by Employment Service staff to provide job finding and placement services.

UI claimants must submit weekly certifications through ArkNet (Internet) or via ArkLine (Telephone) that they satisfied the continuing eligibility requirements of the unemployment insurance program. Those requirements are: continue to be totally unemployed or working part-time; able to work; available for work; and actively seeking work as demonstrated by

contacting a specific number of employers each week based on their labor market. Claimants who fail to meet all of the eligibility requirements are referred to unemployment insurance staff members for further analysis and if applicable, to adjudication staff. UI Technical staff will provide necessary training to Employment Services and WIOA staff concerning general concepts related to the unemployment insurance program and potential issue identification.

Currently jobseekers are provided information on the Wagner-Peyser services available at the Workforce centers. Customers needing further information about training are referred to register in the Arkansas JobLink system to begin self-service activities by using resources such as computers and phones to conduct job searches, create a resume, and respond to employment opportunities through Arkansas JobLink system. Jobseekers can manage their UI claim through the ArkNet website. In addition, to self-service options, claimants can also receive staff-assisted services, such as job search workshops, assistance with access and navigating the Arkansas JobLink system, referral to veteran services, and referral to education, and training.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED. AN ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

Arkansas is a major producer of a variety of agronomic crops. Agriculture is Arkansas' largest industry, adding around \$16 billion to the state's economy annually. The Natural State's diverse landscape and climate produce a wide variety of Arkansas agricultural products. Arkansas is a major exporter of rice, soybeans, cotton, poultry and feed grains. There are 49,346 farms statewide and 97 percent of Arkansas' farms are family-owned. A mere 16 percent of Arkansas' farms account for a whopping 92 percent of production.

The production of these crops is centered in the eastern third of the state but there are notable concentrations elsewhere, particularly in the river valleys of the Arkansas River (central Arkansas) and the Red River (southwest Arkansas).

Commercial and greenhouse production of fruit, vegetable, ornamental, and turfgrass crops are also economically important in many sections of the state.

#### Agriculture Activity

According to the University of Arkansas — Division of Agriculture Research and Extension' 2019 Arkansas Agricultural Profile, 42% of Arkansas land was comprised of farms. There were 42,500 farms on 13.9 million acres, with the average farm size of 327 acres.

In terms of cash receipts, Arkansas' top agricultural commodities were Soybeans, Rice, Corn, Cotton, and Wheat.

Assessing the unique needs of the MSFW population in Arkansas, like many other states, presents several challenges. The MSFW is difficult to identify, share information with or locate. Despite high agricultural activity within the state, it appears a significant number MSFWs pass

through Arkansas for seasonal work and continue to other states, looking at Arkansas as merely a “stopover”.

Typical comments from Employers and their permanent, full-time field supervisors suggest that MSFs come here to work, earn their money and move to the next location. They most generally are sending a significant portion of their pay to their families and must bring in a paycheck. They have no time for training for other employment, unless they can no longer work in the fields due to age, health or other factors. Employers, obviously, want to keep these valued workers and would be reluctant to encourage training or employment outside of meeting the agricultural needs they have.

Other factors such as healthcare, schooling for children, employer requirements, rights, insurance, health & safety information, availability of adequate work clothing and transportation, among others, are needs of the MSFWs. Lack of identification and contact makes it difficult to know how great the needs are. MSFWs are rarely provided transportation to be able to come to town or a career center. Career centers are not available when they are not working. The needed information must be brought to the MSFW in the fields, communities, or frequented businesses/services they utilize.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

The main agricultural crops in Arkansas are soybeans, rice, corn, cotton, and sweet potatoes, with an estimated projected harvest of six million acres that were harvested in program year 2018. Most of these main agricultural crops are concentrated in Central, Eastern, and Northeastern Arkansas.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, most of these main agricultural crops are concentrated in the following regions:

- District 60 (East Central Arkansas) — Arkansas, Cross, Crittenden, Lee, Lonoke, Monroe, Prairie, Phillips, St. Francis, and Woodruff counties.
- District 30 (Northeastern Arkansas) — Clay, Craighead, Greene, Independence, Jackson, Lawrence, Mississippi, Randolph, and White counties.
- District 90 (Southeast Arkansas) — Ashley, Chicot, Desha, Drew, Jefferson, and Lincoln counties.

These are seasonal jobs requiring over two thousand migrant and seasonal workers to cultivate and plant, till and harvest these crops. Agricultural employers are increasingly faced with the lack of domestic labor willing and able to do these long and hard jobs outdoors in all kinds of weather. The majority of these seasonal workers are foreign born workers entering the country on H2-A Visas (temporary agriculture) and most of the returning workers are coming from Mexico and a few are traveling from South Africa. Free housing is included for these workers and any domestic worker than is unable to return to his/her home each day.

Although there are estimated to be fewer than 500 migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs) in the state at any time, the overall majority of H2-A workers enter from Mexico and Spanish is the native language spoken. Over the past couple of the years, there has been an approximately 30% increase in the new agricultural jobs entered into the Arkansas JobLink system.

According to the University of Arkansas — Division of Agriculture Research and Extension, the top five (5) labor-intensive crops, months of heavy activity, and geographic area of prime activity are detailed in the chart below.

#### **Agricultural Activity in Arkansas – Calendar 2018**

<b>CROPS</b>	<b>ACRES HARVESTED    Harvested 2019</b>	<b>PRODUCTION</b>	<b>DURATION OF HARVEST</b>	<b>GEOGRAPHIC AREA/CNTY</b>
<b>SOYBEANS</b>	<b>3,240,000</b>	<b>165,240 BU</b>	<b>July 15 Thru  November 15</b>	<b>Lee, Phillips, St. Francis, Cross</b>
<b>RICE</b>	<b>1,427,000</b>	<b>107,325 CWT</b>	<b>August 10 Thru  October 1</b>	<b>Arkansas, Monroe, Prairie</b>
<b>CORN</b>	<b>645,000</b>	<b>116,745 BU</b>	<b>June 25 Thru  August 31</b>	<b>Lee, Phillips, Cross</b>
<b>COTTON</b>	<b>480,000</b>	<b>1,150 BALES</b>	<b>August 15 Thru  October 21</b>	<b>Mississippi, Craighead, Crittenden</b>
<b>WINTER WHEAT</b>	<b>95,000</b>	<b>5,225 BU</b>	<b>November 30 Thru  March 1</b>	<b>Lonoke, Prairie, Lee, St. Francis</b>

While there were no natural disasters that affected agriculture in the State of Arkansas, the State has experienced historically heavy rainfall in 2019. This rainfall, and accompanying flooding, negatively impacted the State's agricultural planting and harvesting seasons.

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWs IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

Arkansas' foreign MSFWs primarily are from Mexico. The other main country of origination for our foreign MSFWs is South Africa. The primary language spoken by MSFWs is Spanish with some MSFWs speaking Afrikaans, with English frequently being a primary or secondary language for South Africa.

A review of Arkansas' Foreign Labor Certification program for the past three years finds that H-2A posted 80% of their job openings during December – February of each year. The remaining 20% were posted throughout the remaining months of the year.

In 2019, employers indicated that the unpredictable season & weather played a large role in seasonal prep, planting, maintaining, harvesting and finishing of all crops, frequently changing numbers of workers needed onsite from day to day. This unseasonal weather also resulted in long periods waiting on the weather to break, resulting in short bursts of high activity, mostly being completed by local and available workers.

Moving forward, we anticipate that a change in the definition of MSFWs in our Arkansas Job Link (AJL) System will result in more correctly identified MSFWs, but also fewer mis-identified MSFWs.

#### Unique Needs of MSFWs

MSFWs are a unique and very important segment of Arkansas' agricultural economy as they are willing to complete the necessary harvesting and manual labor job duties. However, MSFWs also face a number of challenges seldom faced by other workers. These include the following:

- Education: the education level among MSFWs tends to be low
- Language: general lack of ability to speak and read English and, at times, Spanish
- Economic Status: the income level of MSFWs frequently falls well below the poverty level
- Limited access to public transportation in most rural areas of the state
- Limited access to medical services

#### 4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Arkansas strives to continue improvement interacting with and providing assistance to our MSFW community. Arkansas is not designated as a significant MSFW state due to the low percentage of MSFWs identified. Previously, most contact with MSFWs is through our National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee. However, in January 2020, we began identifying, training and assigning state merit center staff who meet the required qualifications for an outreach worker and who are currently working in areas of high MSFW activity. These outreach workers will work under the direct supervision of our Statewide Targeted Populations Outreach Coordinator. Upon completion of outreach training, these staff will begin locating and contacting MSFWs in their assigned area of the state, as part-time outreach workers. During the periods of highest MSFW activity, these workers will be conducting more full-time outreach activity. This outreach activity will be revisited a minimum of once a year to review data collected and determine if the number of outreach workers or their locations need to be adjusted.

Our Targeted Populations Advisor and State Monitor Advocate have been developing additional partnerships which will provide more sources for dissemination of information about the Arkansas Workforce System and available partners services, training opportunities, and MSFW rights, health and safety information. Additional resources for potential outreach activities include the Arkansas Department of Human Services, the Arkansas Department of Education,

Legal Aid of Arkansas, the Mexican Consulate, HOLA Arkansas, Catholic Charities, and various regional and local health, medical and charitable organizations which serve the MSFWs.

Finally, we have reached out to regional Agricultural Employer Groups and Associations and begun attending their meetings to provide program information that can be shared with MSFWs.

Arkansas will train and assign Local Workforce Center staff who meet the required qualifications for an outreach worker and deploy them across the State, focusing upon those geographical areas where the majority of MSFWs are located. These outreach workers will, upon completion of outreach training, begin locating and contacting MSFWs in their assigned area of the state, as part-time outreach workers. This outreach activity will be revisited a minimum of once a year to review data collected and determine if the number of outreach workers or their locations need to be adjusted. Upon completion of training, the outreach workers will begin identifying MSFW populations, including their locations to provide outreach activities as the first order of priority. The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) will ensure fluid communication of data, information and provision of manpower in a unified manner throughout the state.

Additionally, our Targeted Populations Outreach Coordinator has also contacted other relevant agencies, including Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Legal Aid of Arkansas, the Mexican Consulate and various other organizations for the express purpose of identifying other available services for Arkansas' MSFW population. This information will be incorporated into the training that is provided to our Local Office Outreach staff.

We have incorporated the use of appearances at Laundromats and Grocery Stores as these are areas where MSFWs congregate. Additionally, we will place information, in Spanish, in area churches and local community buildings to expand our reach beyond our normal employment services offices.

In 2019, our Targeted Populations Outreach Coordinator and State Monitor Advocate attended several trainings and an on-site technical assistance visit to Colorado to better understand how to conduct outreach and also train Local Office Outreach staff. Collectively, the Targeted Populations Outreach Coordinator and State Monitor Advocate are developing training and information gleaned from Colorado to develop training materials that will supplement our existing training. Local Office Outreach staff will be provided training on WIOA Titles I & III as well as the Complaint system. Additionally, we will incorporate the use of materials from the Workforce GPS and other sources to enhance our Outreach Staff's knowledge and abilities.

Finally, ADWS will coordinate with the WIOA Section 167 NFJP recipient with regard to MSFW needs, and to facilitate or provide intensive services and training services. This will be facilitated by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Additionally, ADWS partner with the NFJP recipient and incorporate a partnering of our collective staff's efforts to conduct outreach and learn all aspects of providing services to MSFWs. The ADWS will engage with other agricultural groups, associations and organizations for the purpose of identifying available services and referral opportunities to assist MSFWs. Similarly, ADWS will develop and maintain relationships with agencies who may assist or who work specifically with the MSFWs and incorporate this information into our Local Office Outreach staff training.



In Arkansas, state merit staff members are very familiar with the UI Program, which is embedded into their regular job duties. However, as part of the outreach worker training, we will incorporate the core elements of partner programs, including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and UI eligibility. This training will address items such as eligibility, program services and benefits, resources for additional or more detailed information, application and contact information. Plans are for both this topic of training as well as other outreach related topics, to occur a minimum of once a year, with training on any adjustments, new topics or responsibilities occurring as needed. Training has occurred for outreach workers.

#### Sexual Harassment Training

Arkansas' WIOA Program Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) officer has been providing sexual harassment training to the state's Arkansas Workforce Center staff. We will require that this training is provided to the State Monitor Advocate and AHDC staff as well, beginning early 2018. This training will be periodically conducted to ensure that all new staff members have been trained as well.

For the continuing training and development of outreach workers, state or national professional development opportunities will be attended by State merit staff outreach workers within the limits of available resources. These continuing training and development opportunities for State merit staff outreach workers will take advantage of statewide WIOA related trainings, employee continuing education and other related training/informational events which will benefit their knowledge and skills.

ADWS will take full advantage of the wealth of training and information provided by the *Workforce GPS* website. We will implement a minimum number of training hours per year for this staff.

Similar to other states, ADWS entered into a statewide memorandum of understanding (MOU) with AHDC. This MOU assists in establishing and demonstrating effective outreach coordination.

The NFJP grantee, AHDC, provides career and training services and related assistance for MSFWs, along with Arkansas Workforce Center staff. The cooperative agreement between ADWS and AHDC was developed to coordinate and enhance service delivery to MSFWs. This partnership provides for the sharing of labor market information, basic, individualized, and career services, training, supportive services and job-related resources available to MSFWs.

The State Monitor Advocate will meet quarterly with AHDC to discuss improving coordination and the administration of employment and training services offered to MSFWs. Additionally, the State Monitor Advocate will meet with Arkansas Workforce Center staff to discuss the efforts of AHDC and to improve shared responsibility of the outreach efforts.

### 5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

#### Employment and Training Services

MSFWs are provided access to the full range of employment services, benefits, information, and protection available in the state's one-stop system. Outreach materials are disseminated throughout the state, especially in the areas of the state where MSFWs are likely to gather and work.

Through the Arkansas Job Link (AJL) job matching system, agricultural jobs are listed statewide and are available to all jobseekers in the state as well as out of state by creating an account and

searching for suitable employment. An AJL employer account provides the ability to post job openings, search resumes for qualified employees, receive emails on new jobseeker resumes and receive assistance listing the agricultural job opening. ADWS will provide agricultural employers with applicants who meet the job-related selection criteria established by the employers.

Our goal for this year is to better meet the needs of agricultural employers. As such, ADWS will continue to improve the agricultural referral process including, but not limited to, the following:

- Providing information regarding available services to workers when arriving at job sites
- Engaging agricultural employers to determine short- and long-term employment goals
- Providing agricultural employers with information related to farmworker rights
- Develop strategies to facilitate and coordinate the engagement of the agricultural industry into the workforce development system
- Assist agricultural employers in creating year-round, permanent jobs

Perhaps our most important change will be engaging the Arkansas Department of Education's Migrant Education Program (ARMEP). The Arkansas Migrant Education Division administers programs that provide supplemental academic and supportive services to the children of families who migrate to find work in the agricultural and fishing industries.

The programs are designed to help migrant children, who are uniquely affected by the combined effects of poverty, language, cultural barriers, and the migratory lifestyle, to meet the same challenging academic content and student academic achievement standards that are expected of all children.

The Arkansas Employment Service complaint system was severely outdated and not clearly communicated to one-stop center staff. Consequently, it is currently being re-developed and modernized. Upon completion, training will be provided to state merit and other workforce center staff.

It is also anticipated that giving further training to one-stop center staff in properly identifying MSFWs will result in more MSFW complaints being identified. Outreach workers and their activity in work and community settings, will allow for increased knowledge of not only the complaint system but all available resources. Additionally, training of the complaint system for all one-stop center staff should also lead to increased use of the complaint system.

Outreach materials to be developed will include complaint system information for workers, employers and organizations who work with MSFWs.

The State Monitor Advocate receives training from the Regional and National Monitor Advocates regarding the Agricultural Recruitment System and how it is used to assist employers get domestic labor prior to the introduction of H2-A worker requests.

To meet agricultural employers' needs, ADWS will continue its efforts to partner with agricultural associations to provide educational seminars to provide information to agricultural employers. This will include the development of specific sections on both the ADWS and the AHDC websites that provides information related to MSFWs.

## 6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

### A. COLLABORATION

Arkansas will continue its collaborative agreement with the Arkansas Human Development Corporation and other agencies in the state, such as the Arkansas Farm Bureau, OSHA, Wage & Hour and the Department of Labor's Office of Foreign Labor Certification. Additionally, the State Monitor Advocate will lead the development of partnerships with organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). LULAC has five (5) local councils in Central and Northwest Arkansas which are provide advocacy for and services to the Latino population in Arkansas.

As previously mentioned, the Targeted Populations Outreach Coordinator is forming a partnership with Arkansas Department of Education's Migrant Education Program (ARMEP). Other partnerships will be established with the Hispanic Community Services, El Centro Hispano, and the Hispanic Women's Organization of Arkansas.

## B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP. The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

In developing the AOP, the State Monitor Advocate solicited information and suggestions from the NFJP grantee, AHDC. Other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, and interested organizations were provided the opportunity to review and provide comment during the required State Plan Public Notice period. No comments were received.

## C. DATA ASSESSMENT

A review of the past four (4) years of data shows that Arkansas has room for great improvement. Due to the Fall 2019 on-site monitoring visit by the UDSOL, specific areas requiring improvement have been identified.

Specifically, we are now aware that our MSFW definition in our Arkansas Job Link (AJL) system was incorrect. This error has resulted in a lack of confidence in our previous data by both ourselves and the USDOL.

The state believes the proper identification of MSFWs at Centers and in AJL will result in the meeting of 4 or more equity indicators each quarter, in the future.

## D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The State Monitor Advocate has met with all of the local office managers to continually advise and inform them and their staff on any new issues or regulations that are relevant to service to farmworkers and their families in Arkansas.

It is expected that the hiring of a Targeted Populations Coordinator, plus the strategic formation of Business Services Teams in our Local Workforce Areas will greatly enhance our progress in providing services to MSFWs.

We believe that we have experienced progress in the following areas:

- Identification of significant documents, informational materials and other items used daily by our centers which need translation to Spanish, the primary non-English language identified;
- Identification of pertinent agricultural groups, organizations and associations and pursuing alliances with them;
- Ongoing training to center staff with a desk aid for proper identification of MSFWs; Desk aid with new MSFW definition trained upon and provided. This training will be ongoing.
- Improved partnership and developing a new MOU with our NFJP partner; and
- Identification of community based events related to MSFWs or their communities is ongoing.

#### E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The State Monitor Advocate, Maria Garcia, participated in the preparation of the agricultural plan and has been afforded the opportunity to approve and comment on the plan. Such review indicates that the plan has been prepared properly, omitting none of the prescribed requirements and properly describing the activities planned for providing services to both agricultural employers and migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

All recommendations were included as the State Monitor Advocate presented them in the annual MSFW summary developed under 20CFR 653.108(t) in the preparation of this plan.

#### WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	

#### WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	66.0	73.4	66.0	73.4
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	67.0	74.5	67.0	74.5
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	4,275.00	5,200.00	4,275.00	5,200.00
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.*

### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

#### A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS-AES) adopted the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE)'s College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for Adult Education developed by Susan Pimentel during program year 2014-2015, but was not fully implemented until the fall of 2016. Adult education's content standards are aligned with K-12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which were adopted by the Arkansas Department of Education for K-12 schools during the 2013-2014 year, through the adoption of the Career and College Readiness (CCR) standards. The CCR standards were adopted due to its rigorous research and scientific evidence of effectiveness and applicability to Adult Education. Additionally, the standards are designed to prepare learners for postsecondary education and training and/or unsubsidized employment.

The CCR standards used the CCSS to "identify a manageable set of the CCSS most indispensable for college and career readiness and important to adult students". The CCR Standards then are

translated into curriculum and lessons for teaching within the content of the standards to students. Classroom activities, assignments, and a range of formative and summative assessments all help determine whether or not students are absorbing the essential skills and knowledge included in the standards.

The Arkansas CCR Framework encompasses language, math, reading, science, social studies and writing and contains a list of references and all materials utilized in the document in addition to a key of all terms used. The framework provides content standards, sample classroom activities and various learning materials to facilitate learning for all learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Instructors can utilize the framework to build their own curriculum and lesson plans to further impact student learning. The framework is designed as a living document, changing over time as do resources and student needs.

Professional development training is provided to understand and instruct within the context of content standards. For example, during the *Masterpiece- Reading/Language Art for Part-time Teachers* workshop, adult education instructors learned how to lead students to master close reading and evidence-based writing. The facilitator provided a brief refresher on how to use the standards to develop curriculum and strengthen students' critical thinking and problem solving skills. To ensure adult education instructors are able to have access to content related trainings, the state provides professional development opportunities in the evening, regionally, online, face-to-face, and by request, on weekends.

Statewide software purchased by the state for academic learning must also be aligned to content standards. In addition, at the local level, textbooks and other supportive learning tools must be aligned to the college and career readiness standards before being approved to purchase. Adult education instructors are expected to identify the CCR standards in lesson plans. During program reviews and technical site visits, lesson plans and/or syllabi are reviewed to ensure compliance.

Over the past two years, professional development has been focused on helping teachers to align the CCR framework into the curriculum and integrate employability, digital, and financial literacy standards within lesson plans. In addition, improving the quality of instruction is also a professional development goal. Therefore, ongoing professional development using evidence-based practices in core subject areas is a key area of focus for teacher development.

To improve student pass rate and outcomes on the high school equivalency assessment, the state office provided adult education center directors with direct access to analytical documents from high school equivalency testing site. This enables the directors to have constant access to data useful in determining the effectiveness of classroom instruction. The expectation is that student scores should be on the increase in tandem with the increased focus on teaching CCR standards. Directors may discern which content areas show strength and which show weakness by researching group data, rather than being totally dependent upon annual or quarterly reports.

## B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

### ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section provides Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and English Second Language (ESL) services to all eligible adult education and literacy programs in Arkansas. Using the thirteen considerations, eligible programs will be funded as stated in "Distribution of Funds for Core Programs" using the previously stated competitive processes. Eligible provider's activities

include reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider, will be based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice. In addition, adult education and literacy providers work collaboratively with other agencies to enhance services. For example, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services use federal funding to provide services to individuals with disabilities. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services provides funds to those individuals seeking to enter or retain employment or receive specialized training after completing basic skills acquisition through Arkansas Adult Education.

All providers receiving state and/or federal funding from the Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section will be required to provide the following services in year one: adult education and literacy activities and workforce preparation (state requirement). The following service must be implemented or in progress in year one: integrated education and training programs (state requirement). As applicable, providers will be required to provide the following services in year one which include, English language acquisition, Integrated English Language Literacy and Civics Education, and Correctional/Institutional instruction. Optional services that may be provided throughout the grant period include workplace classes and family literacy activities. In addition, financial and digital literacy, a state requirement, shall be integrated into the curriculum. Details of these activities will be provided in each program's proposal.

**1. Adult Education and Literacy Activities** include instruction and education services below a postsecondary level in reading, writing, and speaking in English, and computing and solving problems. These services increase a student's ability to achieve a secondary school diploma or equivalent, transition to postsecondary education and training, and obtain employment.

**1a. Scope:** All organizations receiving WIOA Title II funds, hereinafter "local providers," will offer Adult Education and Literacy Activities.

**1b. Organization:** The organization of Adult Education and Literacy Activities may vary according to the population served and the resources available, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

**2. English Language Acquisition** includes adult education and literacy activities for English language learners with an additional skill requirement, comprehension of the English language.

Note: Eligible providers with less than 500 adults in their county (ies) that speak English "less than very well," based on the most current census data, are not required to offer English language acquisition programs. (State requirement)

**2a. Scope:** All providers will offer English Language Acquisition activities if there is a sufficient number of adult English language learners in their service areas.

**2b. Organization:** The organization of English Language Acquisition Activities may vary according to the populations served and the resources available, but all programs shall follow the state's Adult Education Policies and the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

**3. Family Literacy Activities** include interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children. To offer family literacy activities as defined in WIOA requires coordination with other services for the children's component. Providers will assist students in their roles as parents and family members by providing foundational skills that enable them to support their children's learning needs and improve economic self-sufficiency for their families.

Family literacy defined in WIOA must integrate all of the following activities:

- Parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency.
- Interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children.
- Training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teachers for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
- Age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

**3a. Scope:** Local providers may offer Family Literacy Activities in partnership with other agencies or organizations such as schools. The scope of family literacy activities will be determined by the interest of external partners.

**3b. Organization:** Family literacy activities will be organized collaboratively between local providers and their partners, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking. Family literacy is an optional activity.

**4. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education** will provide Immigrants and English learners access to English language acquisition services and civics education in combination with an integrated education and training program. English infused with civics education helps immigrants and English learners understand the American system of government and what it means to be a citizen and to be involved in civics activities. To live and work in the United States means not only a command of the language, but equally important are the civics-related skills and knowledge necessary to become involved parents, workers, and community members. Therefore, every adult education and literacy council program offering English language acquisition services will also include civics education. Refer to WIOA, Section 243.

**4a. Scope:** Local providers who can demonstrate adequate numbers of adult English language learners in their service areas may apply to offer Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Activities. In addition, providers who meet the criteria and demonstrate effectiveness in performing the integrated English literacy and civics education in combination with integrated education and training activities will be awarded. Depending upon the amount of funding from the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), the State will fund between 4-6 providers in areas of greatest need using Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education funds. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education is a requirement for only those providers who apply and receive IEL/CE funding.

**4b. Organization:** The organization of Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Activities may vary according to the populations served and the resources available, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking

**5. Workforce Preparation** includes activities, programs, or services designed to help individuals acquire a combination of basic academic skills and employability skills such as critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills. These activities include competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of



postsecondary education or training, or employment. Workforce preparation skills will be integrated in the adult basic education and literacy curriculum, therefore, occurring concurrently with adult basic and literacy skills instruction. Per grant assurances, teachers will integrate technology use in their lesson plans and all students will have access to and use computers and technology to enhance their learning and digital literacy skills. Each program will also be required to have a Career Development Facilitator to assist students in transitioning into the workforce and/or postsecondary education or training (state requirement).

**5a. Scope:** All providers will offer Workforce Preparation Activities.

**5b. Organization:** The organization of workforce preparation activities may vary according to the populations served and resources available, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

**6. Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities** include instruction at a workplace or an off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce. Instruction will include contextualized literacy, English language acquisition, and workforce preparation at Educational Functioning Levels appropriate to learners. Successful workplace literacy activities involve strong partnerships with employers or employee organizations in the design and delivery of the instructional program based on workplace needs.

**6a. Scope:** Local providers may offer Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities in partnership with employers or employee organizations. The scope of Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities will be determined by the interest of external partners.

**6b. Organization:** Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities will be organized at a workplace or an off-site location in collaboration between local providers and their partners, but will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

**7. Integrated education and training activities** is a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

**7a. Scope:** Local providers must align the IET with the local workforce development plan and have in place or be in progress of establishing an integrated education and training program by July 1, 2020. Providers will offer Integrated Education and Training Activities in a career pathways model. Failure to meet this requirement may result in a loss or reduction of funding for a provider. [State Requirement]

**7b. Organization:** Integrated Education and Training Activities will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking. Instruction for learners who enroll in pathways available in the Accelerating Opportunity Arkansas model will include co-enrollment in postsecondary career technical education courses team-taught by basic skills and career technical instructors. Programs shall provide expanded transition services including career development facilitators and college success classes.

**8. Financial Literacy Activities (State Required)** include instruction that entails the knowledge of properly making decisions pertaining to certain personal finance areas like real estate, insurance, investing, saving, tax planning, and retirement. Financial literacy will be

integrated into the curriculum to assist learners in financial matters to confidently take effective action that best fulfills personal, family, and global community goals. (State Required)

**8a. Scope:** All providers will offer financial literacy activities.

**8b. Organization:** The organization of workforce preparation activities may vary according to the populations served and resources available, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

Due to WIOA standards, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section has encouraged Adult Education programs in Arkansas to develop career pathways with business and industry in each local program area. These partnerships will address the needs of both business/industry and ABE, ASE and ESL students. Local Adult Education programs and Literacy Councils have established local boards that include representatives from business and industry. Each adult education and literacy provider is required to have someone trained as a Career Development Facilitator. At each local program, a Career Development Facilitator is either on staff or available to visit with students to reinforce the career focused skills and activities being taught at the centers. These facilitators use career assessment results and career plans with short-term and long-term goals to assist students in transitioning to the workforce. Career Development Facilitators are trained to study each local job market and review data from the Workforce Development office to communicate high demand openings and career options to students.

Programs also invite representatives from business and industry to present to students and assist with their transition into the workforce. Students who have a desire to study specific trades that offer apprenticeships receive relevant training in these occupational clusters that are vital to each local community. Each of these activities and goals are incorporated into adult education and literacy activities, family literacy classes, English language acquisition classes, workplace adult education and literacy classes, integrated English language and literacy classes as well as workforce preparation activities. This makes the relationship between Adult Education and the workforce that much more valuable because career pathway initiatives are woven into all aspects of our educational services.

#### C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Providers serving individuals in a correctional facility are required to offer adult education and literacy activities and transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. Although not required, providers who receive correctional education funding are encouraged to offer integrated education and training and develop career pathways. Integrated education and training will include more job skills training. Career pathways will include apprenticeship opportunities. In addition, programs are encouraged to use guidance and supportive services where possible and to provide education and training through cooperative efforts with providers in correctional settings. Special education, as determined through the intake process, will provide appropriate and effective instructional and testing accommodations for students who are identified as having a disability. Peer tutoring is a tutoring arrangement in which students work in pairs to help one another learn material or practice an academic task.

For programs serving criminal offenders in a correctional institution, priority shall be given to serving individuals who are likely to leave these institutions within five years of participation in the program. Eligible providers who offer classes for incarcerated adults must consult with facility staff about expected release dates of potential students to assess eligibility and to

determine class locations. Programs are asked to address this requirement in their applications, and the Adult Education Section monitors compliance.

A correctional institution includes any prison; jail; reformatory; work farm; detention center; halfway house; community-based rehabilitation center; or any other similar institution designed for confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders. A criminal offender is any individual who is charged with or convicted of any criminal offense.

Funds will be distributed on a competitive basis that is direct and equitable through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process as described under Section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and title II subtitle C. The same grant announcement, application, and process will be used for all proposals and treated the same way in evaluation. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section, shall use not less than 82.5 percent of the grant funds to award grants and contracts under section 231 and to carry out section 225, of which not more than 20 percent of such amount shall be available to carry out section 225.

Each eligible provider seeking federal funds must submit and meet the requirements of the grant. Allocation of the available funds is based on each eligible provider's enrollment, performance, and demonstrated effectiveness. Funds available under section 225 (a) (1) of the WIOA will be a multi-year grant cycle. However, the ADWS-AES state office will review the performance levels of providers each year to ensure continuous improvement of outcomes.

In addition to any reports required by Adult Education, each eligible correctional institution receiving funds under this section shall annually prepare and submit a report of progress. Reports of progress shall include, but not limited to, activities carried out under this section, relative rate of recidivism, enrollment, educational gains and/or High School Equivalency outcomes, employment (sustainable wage) and employment retention (length of employment).

#### D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

***(d) Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program. Describe how the State will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, including how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities.***

(d) The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS-AES) will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) under Section 243 to provide educational services to adult English language learners (ELLs), including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries to acquire English language skills necessary to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens. IEL/CE program providers will be established through an open and competitive process that is direct and equitable as outlined in section III "Distribution of Funds for Core Programs". Integrated Education and Training activities are required for all funded local programs to meet the requirements of section 243. Local programs will offer at least one IET that is aligned with the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) identified employment needs and availability of educators and trainers in the area. Local programs will recruit IEL/CE participants to enroll in IET programs and provide additional civics, language and academic support as needed by ELLs. ADWS-AES will provide technical assistance and monitor local programs offering relevant IET programs; have effective IET recruitment and retention activities aimed at IEL/CE participants;

provide adequate language support in addition to concurrent and contextualized, Literacy, ESL, and workforce preparation activities.

***(d2) Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II, subtitle C, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and how the funds will be used for the program.***

(d2) IEL/CE funds will be allocated to providers based on a direct and equitable, competitive process. Funds will be distributed on a competitive basis that is direct and equitable through the RFP process. Funds available under section 243 of the WIOA will be for a four-year cycle. The state will provide technical assistance to section 243 funded programs to ensure compliance and monitor performance. If it is deemed that a funded program is under performing after technical assistance has been provided, ADWS-AES may suspend section 243 funding and find alternatives to ensure services are continued in the local areas- increasing funding to other section 243 funded providers or hold a targeted competition. Funds will be allocated using a model that references adult ELL demographics and immigration patterns for the state. It is anticipated that the Adult Education Section of the Division of Workforce Services will receive at least the established and historical minimum of \$200,000 per year. In accordance with the requirements of Title II, programs requesting IEL/CE grant-based funds through the RFP process will be awarded based on a local program's ELL enrolled population; ELL enrolled population growth; performance in educational gains and outcomes; and, availability of Integrated and Education Training programs. Programs requesting funds through the RFP will include a budget and narrative describing the program's plans for funds; the ELL population enrolled for the previous fiscal year; and, actual or anticipated ELL population growth based on the Department of Labor statistics. Each RFP will be evaluated based on a rubric provided by the state and funds will be distributed based on need and services provided.

The providers who meet the criteria and demonstrate effectiveness in performing the integrated English literacy and civics education in combination with integrated education and training activities will be awarded. Services will include instruction in the following areas: literacy, English language acquisition, rights and responsibilities of citizenship, civic participation, and workforce training.

***(d3) Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.***

(d3) In order to prepare and place adult ELL in employment and integrate with the local workforce, IEL/CE courses must provide content-based and integrated instruction on topics proposed by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (UCIS), local workforce/employer needs and requests as well as ELL needs within Arkansas. Programs are highly encouraged to involve students in activities. The topics are as follows:

1. *English Language Instruction:*

a) Reading, b) Writing, c) Listening, d) Speaking

2. *Civics activities:*

**Four Pillars of Civics:**

a) Naturalization & Citizenship; b) Civic Participation; c) US History; and d) Government

### 3. *Workforce Training:*

- Soft Skills: Completing Employment Applications, Interview Techniques, Computer Literacy, Workplace Culture
- Employability Certificates: Career Readiness Certificate, WAGE™
- Training Programs: Accelerating Opportunity, Apprenticeships, Employer requested Training

IEL/CE programs will operate in combination with integrated education and training activities through Career Pathways, including partnerships with business and industry and other educational institutions, and language instruction to address local needs. Partnerships provide opportunities for students to participate in employment training through accelerated opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships. IEL/CE programs can actively and specifically engage students by hosting guest speakers from and organizing field trips to local agencies and businesses as well as guiding students through language, civic, and employment education.

IEL/CE programs will provide English language instruction within a content-based Civics curriculum based on topics and guidelines provided by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as well as the English Language Proficiency Standards. In addition to English language instruction, digital literacy and financial literacy, workforce skills will be emphasized and integrated. Workforce skills include soft skills development; industry recognized credentials; and, training opportunities, such as apprenticeships and national programs such as Accelerating Opportunity. In addition to partnerships with workforce agencies, local programs will foster employers and vocational training service providers. The IEL/CE content and activities are aimed to be delivered through effective practices that enable ELLs to increase their English language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in combination with civics and workforce education in order to better understand and navigate governmental, educational, and workplace systems and key American institutions. In addition to classroom instruction, programs are encouraged to involve students in activities supported by IEL/CE funds, such as field trips to civic or historic related venues; guest speakers to expand and enhance classroom instruction; and, organized visits to local workplaces.

Along with explicit content-based classroom instruction, partnerships with other agencies, such as the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), as well as business and industry, should aim for ELLs to obtain, retain, and/or upgrade employment. Workforce training should be developed based on student and local employment needs. These may include, but are not limited to, soft skill development internships, apprenticeships, or employer on-site training for employment and language skills.

The State has developed a prescribed list of topics and objectives based on UCIS guidelines and suggestions for Civics Education. Employment was added to be in accordance with WIOA guidelines regarding IEL/CE. Programs that are supported with IEL/CE grant funds should cover the following topics and objectives. Programs are encouraged to add or further develop these topics and objectives.

Topic	Objective
<b>Consumer Economics</b>	<p>Banking/Finance: types of accounts, budgeting, check cashing, paychecks, taxes</p> <p>Consumer Rights: filing complaints</p> <p>Housing: types of housing, lease/rent, housing assistance, tenant rights, utility providers</p>
<b>Community Resources</b>	<p>Advocacy: civic- oriented organizations, community issues</p> <p>Directory: career services, important places and services available in the city, county, state, and national level (library, city hall, DMV)</p> <p>Education: post-secondary institutions, K-12 school system, parent involvement, organizations, job work training opportunities</p> <p>Family: childcare, parenting, senior services, family activities and resources in the community</p> <p>Immigrant Resources: rights, organizations, and services</p> <p>Safety/Security: emergency services, personal safety, household safety, victim rights, workplace safety</p>
<b>Health</b>	<p>Emergencies: emergency services, procedures</p> <p>Healthcare: nutrition, resources, providers, cost, insurance, drugstores, pharmacies, mental illness, substance abuse, patient rights</p>
<b>Employment</b>	<p>Employment Services: career centers, ADWS, requirements, certifications/licenses, WAGE™</p> <p>Workplace Skills: job applications and interviews, job training programs, workplace culture, computer skills</p> <p>Rights: worker rights, safety</p>
<b>Government and Law</b>	<p>Citizenship Preparation: structure and role of government on local, state, and federal levels, voting laws and rights</p> <p>Enforcement: role of police, how to speak and behave when interacting with police</p> <p>Identifications: obtaining a driver's license, state identification, permanent resident card</p> <p>Laws: domestic violence laws, child abuse laws, right to a lawyer</p>

Programs that receive IEL/CE grant funds must complete an annual report that includes the number of students served with funds (both ESL and ABE/ASE) and the lessons and materials used in the following areas:

- \*US History and government
- \*Agency Partnerships and Business & Industry
- \*Language instruction
- \*Rights and Responsibilities of citizenship
- \*Civic participation
- \*Naturalization procedures
- \*Employability skills

***(d4) Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.***

(d4) Arkansas IEL/CE grant awardees are expected to reference the local Workforce Development Boards' plans to identify the high demand industries and skills in each of the program's area/region. Local Program Directors regularly attend local Workforce Development Board meetings in order to be aware of local business needs, changes, and challenges in the area/region and how they may impact program design and instruction. Grant awardees select relevant workforce preparation content that is aligned with local needs and the available Integrated and Education Training program..

Recruitment and enrollment of students into IEL/CEs will be a focus in this grant application process. Interest, language ability and cost are the specific barriers to many students. Recipients of IEL/CE funds are expected to connect with other programs such as Title I and Title III to identify participants and help provide additional supportive services.

#### E. STATE LEADERSHIP

##### 1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

(e) The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section will use no more than 12.5% of federal funds for the following adult education and literacy activities to develop or enhance the adult education system of the state. The four required activities are included below along with how the state will use leadership funds to carry out activities under section 223 of WIOA.

***(A) Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop required partners to implement the strategies in the Unified or Combined State Plan as described in section 223(1)(a).***

(A) Since Fall 2015, a WIOA Executive Committee comprised of key core partners that include representatives from Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV was created to develop the State Plan and address the needs of employers and the workforce. Some of the partners include Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division for Services for the Blind, and the Division of Workforce Services. Leadership meet regularly as the WIOA Executive Committee where plans are made for meeting the needs of clients and students, as well as completing the recent state plan modifications. Subcommittees on policy, information technology, finance, core measures, sector strategies, and transition also meet to ensure continued progress in these areas. State-level and local core partners statewide meet semi-annually to share progress in various initiatives, highlight collaborative efforts and conduct activities geared toward improving collaboration

between the partners. At the local level, an adult education provider serves on the local workforce development board as a representative of other adult providers in the region. In addition, some adult education programs are located within workforce centers or have a satellite program located there, and all of the adult education programs across the state provide services to one-stop participants.

Collaboration between ADWS-AES and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services allows adult education students to receive a diagnosis of disabilities and receive services, if eligible, through Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Additionally, a local adult education program provided instruction to students with disabilities at the Arkansas Career and Technical Institute, a part of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

Adult education providers have collaborated with other core partners to offer career pathways opportunities for students. For example, Van Buren School District Adult Education program offers a pre-apprenticeship program in nursing to students. This partnership includes Title IV, Arkansas Career Technical Institute, which supplies the instructor and equipment; National Apprenticeship Training Foundation, which provides the curriculum; and the Western Region Local Workforce Development Board, which provides the funding. Adult education provides the facility and a basic skills partnership. This is a great examples of how a career pathways has been developed for an entry level position and how different sources of funding are being utilized to meet a common objective.

Adult education also provides Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) testing for Title I and Title III participants. The Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate involves collaboration between ADWS-AES, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas Workforce Centers, the Arkansas Division of Higher Education, the Arkansas Community Colleges, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, and the Arkansas Department of Education, with the Governor signing the official Arkansas CRC certificates. Adult education programs provide basic skills improvement through regular adult education services when test takers fail the CRC twice. Recently, this initiative has begun offering the Platinum CRC, which takes higher skill levels to earn. It is hoped that this move will increase the number of people who come to adult education to improve their skills in order to earn this credential.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section will continue its partnership with the Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC) to support Integrated Education and Training programs to adults without a high school diploma. ACC supports the 22 community colleges in Arkansas and supports individuals on their pathway to a better career. In addition, ACC has links to all of the community colleges in Arkansas, which also contains the degree and career pathways offered. Community colleges serves as the fiduciary agency for 22 of the 36 adult education providers.

Adult education provides support to students who have been accepted into college, but require developmental courses through its transition/bridge program. For example, during the summer Northwest Arkansas Community College adult education program provides a Transition to College course for both adult education students and those recently accepted into college. Adult education provides instruction in basic skills such as reading, math, and English. In addition, providers also integrate financial literacy, digital literacy, employability skills, time management, test taking strategies, and study skills into the course. The class is designed to not only give students' academic support, but also to provide an overview of what to expect in college once enrolled. Ultimately, the bridge class can help improve the retention and success rate of students.



The Adult Education Section works with the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services as well as the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to match employment and postsecondary data for its students, providing information essential for reporting.

The Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS-AES) partnered with the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide services to Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) enrolled in the Employment and Training (E&T) Program of DHS's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Through this partnership, ADWS-AES monitors the progress of ABAWDs referred to the E&T program and provides Adult Basic Education, workplace skills, certification opportunities through the office's WAGE™ and Integrated and Education Training (IET) programs, to assist the participant in meeting educational and vocational goals. In addition to those referred by DHS, ADWS-AES works to identify and serve Adult Education students who may also benefit from SNAP E&T services. The partnership currently services 74 of the state's 75 counties, with the last county being serviced by a Local Education Agency that provides adult education services.

In summary, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS-AES) has worked in close collaboration with its partners to ensure success in implementation of the state plan and thereby, meeting the needs of Arkansans

***(B) Establishment or operation of a high-quality professional development programs as described in section 223(1) (a).***

(B) Arkansas has its own professional development resource center, The Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC). The AALRC is funded through the Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS-AES). It was established in 1990 to provide a source for identification, evaluation, and dissemination of materials and information to adult education/literacy programs. The AALRC is located in Little Rock, Arkansas and has seven full-time employees, which include a Director, Professional Development Coordinator, Information Technology Specialist, Disabilities Project Manager, Media Coordinator, Secretary, and Administrative Assistant. State funds support employee salaries while federal funds are used for the fulfillment of our mission.

Except in specific circumstances approved by ADWS-AES, teachers must hold an Arkansas teacher license in order to teach adult education classes in Arkansas. Teachers must participate in at least 36 hours of professional development annually in order to maintain the license. In addition, Arkansas requires adult education directors, full-time instructors and counselors to be certified in adult education within three years of initial full-time employment. The AALRC supports this effort by providing tuition reimbursement for those completing this requirement. The AALRC supports the Adult Education Section by supporting statewide program administrators' meetings, numerous committee meetings, publishing a directory of literacy services, and maintaining a website (<http://www.aalrc.org>).

One of the state's initiatives over the years has been to intensely focus professional development training on teacher instruction. ADWS-AES has adopted the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards set forth by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. State staff along with teachers and directors from the field examined each CCR standard in order to align materials used in the field. Subject-focused trainings are provided to assist teachers statewide in delivering high quality instruction based on the CCR Standards.

During the 2017 legislative session, the Arkansas General Assembly passed Act 1063 (the Right to Read Act). Beginning with the 2021-2022 school year, all kindergarten through sixth grade

teachers and kindergarten through 12th-grade special education teachers must show proficiency in the knowledge and practice of scientific reading instruction (evidence-based practices that teach a student how to learn to read). All other teachers must demonstrate an awareness. In addition to Act 1063, Act 416 of 2017 requires education preparation programs to teach scientific reading instruction. Since adult education teachers are required to have a current Arkansas teacher's license, they will also have to meet the Department of Education requirements in order to maintain their license. Arkansas adult education currently has teachers participating in the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR) pilot program. The teachers will be trained and then later help train other teachers across the state. The AALRC also offers professional development training in other content areas such as math, science, and social studies.

The AALRC supports practitioners and trainers through professional development opportunities at state and national conferences. Those include: Arkansas Association for Continuing and Adult Education & Adult Literacy Alliance (AACAE/ALA) Conference, Learning Disabilities Association (LDA), Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) Conference, Hot Springs Institute for Technology, and California State University Northridge (CSUN) Assistive Technology Conference. The AALRC also supports local programs by maintaining a current library of materials, providing research support/information, purchasing/distributing software and materials, and upgrading/redistribution of equipment.

The AALRC uses a variety of methods to ensure that local program directors and staff are aware of professional development activities. An email is sent to the program directors explaining each training event, and event information is included on the AALRC website ([www.aalrc.org](http://www.aalrc.org)) under the professional development heading. Information regarding training activities is also placed in the AALRC newsletter which is published quarterly. The newsletters are available on the website and mailed to each local program. For those attending training sessions, the AALRC pays travel expenses according to the state travel guidelines for those participants paid with adult education funds.

The AALRC uses a system called ESC Works to track activities and participants. Educators in the State of Arkansas must register for and track professional development events with this online system. Participants are able to manage their own transcripts in the system to add professional development attended outside of the AALRC (i.e. state conference, national conference).

In order to assess the quality of its professional development programs, the AALRC uses Guskey's model for the Five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation. Evaluations are aggregated and evaluated to determine quality of training and adjustments are made according to the results in order to improve effectiveness of the professional development program and the impact on student learning outcomes.

To support local programs and instructors, a combination of methods are used to assess the effectiveness of professional development training. Classroom observations, student educational gains of teacher participants, focus groups, and overall self-reporting tools are used to determine professional development effectiveness. Data from the adult education management information system are utilized to evaluate and determine if and how the professional development activities impact student learning outcomes.

***(C) Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers as described in section 223(1)(c) .***

(C) The Adult Education Section will continue to offer technical assistance to eligible providers. Many program directors have registered with the Literacy Information and

Communication System (LINCS), which offers a plethora of resources, professional development, and an opportunity to connect with other practitioners. During administrators' meetings and through the professional development resource center, AALRC, trainings by experts in the field of English as a Second Language, Learning Disabilities, Math, Literacy, Distance Education, and much more continue to be offered.

Mandatory Administrators' Meetings are held semi-annually during which policies and procedures are discussed and information is disseminated. During the administrators' meetings, providers also share best practices with one another as well as gain additional professional development training from staff or guest speakers. Additionally, state-level partners share pertinent information with local directors to assist with local collaboration.

The Adult Education Section staff provides technical training on the state's data management system (LACES). LACES- Data Entry covers the basics of entering student information, creating classes, enrolling students in classes, entering assessments, entering attendance hours, and other basic data entry topics. LACES 101 highlights the link between data and program performance and funding, running federal tables, ensuring quality data, basic data searches and reports. LACES 201 focuses on data dives to analyze student enrollment and performance, program and class level data analysis and creating data driven queries. LACES for Instructors focuses on instructors, specifically, can use data to track student progress against instructional content and methods.

State staff provides over ten data management information systems a training a year regionally, as well as during administrators' meetings and conferences. State staff also offers webinars and teleconference training to providers. All providers participate in at least two data management information systems training a year. Technical support is available for LACES via email or telephone and by request, face-to-face.

During the 2018-19 year, specific topics in the use of LACES have been developed and provided at a distance to improve access. The AALRC provides technical assistance through email and telephone contact as well as face-to-face meetings with providers. The AALRC IT Specialist provides software and hardware support to all programs almost on a daily basis.

***(D) Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities as described in section 223 (1)(d).***

(D) Adult education state staff evaluates providers quarterly through the review of each program's quarterly report submission. In it, providers review and report progress on average attendance hours, educational functioning level (EFL) gains, number and percentage of students post-tested, etc. Quarterly reports also allow providers to review operational aspects of the program such as the percentage of funds expended, completion of required professional development, and completed personnel activity reports.

ADWS-AES also performs an annual site visit for each adult education and literacy provider to ensure that state and federal laws and policies are followed, to review program performance, and to connect with Local Education Agency Administrators. Based upon the findings during the site visit, regional program advisors provide technical assistance to program directors and staff to ensure continuous improvement.

Additionally, each year 25% of the current 36 adult education and literacy providers receive a program review, which is a three-day intensive program monitoring and technical site visit by a team of program advisors in the state office. Each provider can expect to have a program review every four years provided there are no major risks or violations identified during an annual site

visit, which would increase review frequency. Providers are assessed in areas including, but not limited to, Program Management and Reporting, Financials, Technology, and Collaboration. This program review process allows program advisors and the State Disabilities Project Manager to thoroughly assess program operations, observe classroom instruction, and review state and federal laws and policies. Once each program is reviewed, ADWS-AES requests a full financial audit review by the state agency's finance department.

ADWS-AES evaluates each program annually through an E&E (Effective and Efficient) calculation, currently based upon the programs' progress on the federally negotiated benchmarks in Table 4. Programs that do not meet the determined percentage of the benchmarks are provided additional technical assistance in order to prepare a performance improvement plan. Plan implementation is monitored throughout the year. Upon not meeting the requirements of E&E for three consecutive years, ADWS-AES makes a recommendation to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board as to whether or not the program should continue to be funded.

Lastly, mandatory Administrators' Meetings are held twice a year in which policies and procedures are discussed and information is disseminated. During the administrators' meeting, providers share best practices with one another as well as gain additional professional development training from staff or guest speakers.

## 2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

Permissible activities from Section 223 (2) that the state will support will be used to expand the services of adult education in the state and may include the following from the law:

(2) The development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, or distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology.

(4) Developing content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways.

(6) The development and implementation of a system to assist in the transition from adult education to postsecondary education, including linkages with postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education.

(8) Activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities.

(9) Identifying the curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards that—

(a) specify what adult learners should know and be able to do in the areas of reading and language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition; and

(b) take into consideration the following:

(i) State adopted academic standards.

(ii) The current adult skills and literacy assessments used in the State or outlying areas.

(iii) The primary indicators of performance described in section 116 of WIOA.

(iv) Standards and academic requirements for enrollment in non-remedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education supported by the state or outlying area.

(v) Where appropriate, the content of occupational and industry skill standards widely used by business and industry in the State or outlying area.

(10) Developing and piloting strategies for improving teacher quality and retention.

#### F. ASSESSING QUALITY

(f) The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section monitors programs quarterly through a desk audit process in which measures such as average attendance hours, educational functioning level (EFL) gains across demographic groups, number of students post-tested, etc. are reported and reviewed. The desk audits also allow programs to review operational aspects of the program such as the percentage of funds expended, completion of required professional development, and completed personnel activity reports.

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section also performs an annual site visit for each adult education and literacy program to ensure that state and federal laws and policies are followed, to review program performance, and to connect with Local Education Agency Administrators. Based upon the findings during the site visit, regional program advisors provide technical assistance to program directors and staff to ensure continuous improvement.

Additionally, approximately every four years, a team of program advisors conducts an intensive program review through which Division staff assesses each program in the following areas:

1. Program Management and Reporting
2. Financials
3. Advisory Committees
4. Personnel and Professional Development
5. Student Intake, Documentation, and Orientation
6. Program Policies
7. Instruction
8. Teaching/Classroom Observation
9. Technology
10. Recruitment/Retention
11. Collaboration
12. Facilities
13. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The program review process allows program advisors and the State Disabilities Project Manager to thoroughly assess program operations, observe classroom instruction, and review state and federal laws and policies. Each program review is accompanied by a full financial review by the state agency's finance department.

Once each program is reviewed, the program receives a report which indicates all findings, recommendations, and commendations. The program then develops and submits a Corrective Action Plan (CAP), if applicable, which details how each finding will be remedied. The program

director and program advisor work together to ensure that each finding is corrected, at which time the program and Local Education Agency are notified.

The state office requires adult education directors to attend a State Administrators' meeting twice a year. During this time, state staff review policies and procedures, state performance, answer questions, and give providers an opportunity to share best practices.

### Evaluating Professional Development

In addition to the technical assistance provided through the evaluation processes, The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section provides varied professional development through the efforts of the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC). Through the AALRC, program directors, faculty and staff have access to training in educational technology, student assessments, and assisting students with disabilities along with many other topics. The AALRC uses a state-wide assessment of professional development needs of educators to plan professional development for the field in order to improve instructional and programmatic practices.

The establishment or operation of professional development programs to improve the quality of instruction pursuant to local activities will continue to be a top priority for the state in order to increase the success of student outcomes. Training will continue for local adult education/literacy providers on the use of resources available electronically, for accessing curricula and for sharing locally produced curricula with other providers. In addition, a stronger emphasis will be placed on ensuring that materials and training will incorporate the research-based components of phonemic awareness, system phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension.

In order to promote continuous improvement of professional development activities and the impact on student learning outcomes, The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section through the AALRC will include ongoing and systematic needs assessment and evaluation processes to not only provide information about the impact of professional development, but to provide data for refining and adjusting professional development activities.

1. Participant evaluations/surveys will be collected for all professional development activities. These evaluations will reflect the response of participants to the objectives, material, presentation and the trainer providers.

2. Evaluations/surveys will be aggregated and evaluated to determine quality of training and adjustments will be made according to the results. These results will be analyzed for areas in need of improvement and changes will be made accordingly.

To support local programs and instructors, a combination of methods is used to assess the effectiveness of professional development training. Classroom observations, student educational gains of teacher participants, focus groups, and overall self-reporting tools is utilized to determine professional development effectiveness. Data from the adult education management information system is utilized to evaluate and determine if the professional development activities impact student learning outcomes. This is an area that the state continues to revisit and make modifications as needed.

The AALRC currently uses Guskey's model for the Five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation. The data from the evaluations is used to analyze the effectiveness of the professional development program and the impact on student learning outcomes.

## ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

#### ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

#### AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
Applicant's Organization	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

<b>APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
<b>PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
First Name	Dr. Charisse
Last Name	Childers
Title	Director
Email	charisse.childers@arkansas.gov

#### SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

The Adult Education Section of the Division of Workforce Services (ADWS-AES) will ensure equitable access and participation in the federally funded Title II programs and meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). ADWS-AES will provide training on and access to tools that addresses the barriers to education, including gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. These trainings are focused on particular issues and topics related to each of the barriers. For example, ADWS-AES has and will continue to provide training on Learning Disabilities that includes assessment tools, accommodations, and instructional materials; Diversity Awareness on various topics, such as age, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, and race; trainings on recruiting, retaining, and instructing English Language Learners. Each adult education provider is required to have an ADA Coordinator on staff to assist students with any disability need they may have. Programs are allowed to check out resources such as reader pens, text-to-speech software, devices to remove background noise, page magnifiers, etc. to meet the needs of students, staff, and employees with disabilities.

ADWS-AES is committed to implementing strategies for ensuring equitable access and participation in the program. The following steps will be or have been implemented as necessary to reduce access barriers and maximize participation.

1. Work with the professional development center ADA Coordinator to identify the special needs of program participants including, but not limited to, access requirements—such as wheel chair access, signers, and interpreters as needed.
2. Develop and implement a plan that will address the identified special access needs indicated by participants prior to events: conferences, seminars, workshops, focus groups, regional trainings, etc. All program-related events will be held in ADA accessible facilities.
3. Offer culturally sensitivity and ADA training for program staff, faculty, and employees.
4. Post information curriculum, materials, and schedules of events on the internet which enables equitable access by participants and enable assistive computer devices to interpret the materials.
5. Continue to monitor for program effectiveness to ensure that the proposed strategies are met, target audience(s) are being reached, and goals and objectives are achieved.

In addition, before grant funds are awarded, each Local Education Agency must ensure equitable access and participation in Adult Education activities to be conducted with federal adult education assistance by addressing the access needs of students, teachers, and other



program beneficiaries in order to overcome barriers to equitable participation, including barriers based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability and age.

#### ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	42.0%	44.0%	43.0%	45.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	46.0%	46.0%	47.0%	47.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$3,955.71	\$4,200	\$4,055.71	\$4,200
Credential Attainment Rate	3.0%	48.0%	5.0%	49.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	48.0%	48.0%	49.0%	49.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.*

#### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

##### A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

The Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a citizen advisory council appointed by the Governor that partners with the Arkansas Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) to develop and to carry out the VR State Plan and ARS' goals and priorities. The SRC assists in shaping and reviewing policy, engages in strategic planning, evaluates the effectiveness of the VR Program, analyzes consumer satisfaction, and provides guidance when developing and reviewing cooperative agreements. The SRC meets quarterly and is updated on important events affecting ARS.

The SRC provided analysis and guidance on the following initiatives:

- The 2018 VR State Plan update and the 2020-2023 VR State Plan
- ARS Field Policy Manual updates

- The 2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

At the request of the SRC, ARS provides a consumer satisfactory survey at case closure. Surveys are tabulated and results are included as part of the SRC's annual report, which is reviewed at the December SRC meeting each year.

## 2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

ARS informs the SRC of state level initiatives affecting VR operations. At the December 2018 meeting, ARS presented changes to the field program policy and procedures manual for SRC input and approval.

At the March 2019 meeting, the ARS Commissioner briefed the SRC about the state-level reorganization effort known as the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019 that would place ARS within the Division of Workforce Services, the WIOA partner within Arkansas for Titles I and III programs. The SRC expressed approval of the proposed reorganization, which was signed into law on April 11, 2019.

The SRC received updates regarding progress on the CSNA conducted by the University of Arkansas. The completed survey was presented to the SRC at the June 2019 meeting. One particular finding in the CSNA indicated the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) should be transformed from a residential program to a new delivery model. This finding was consistent with results from the most recent ACTI monitoring report, and the SRC agreed changes were necessary.

At its quarterly meeting on December 19, 2019, the SRC reviewed the proposed 2020-2023 VR State Plan and expressed approval without comment.

## 3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

No input or recommendation from the SRC was rejected by ARS.

### B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

#### 1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

Not applicable to ARS.

#### 2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

Not applicable to ARS.

#### 3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

Not applicable to ARS.

### C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

#### 1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

ARS collaborates and coordinates services with federal, state, and local agencies that contribute to the vocational rehabilitation and independent living of Arkansans with disabilities.

Collaborating agencies include:

- Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Learning Services, Special Education Unit – Arkansas Transition Services
- Arkansas Governor’s Employment First Taskforce
- Centers for Independent Living
- Community Rehabilitation Programs
- Developmental Disability Providers
- Department of Human Services - Division of Adult, Aging and Behavioral Health Services, Working Disabled Medicaid Program, and Division of Developmental Disabilities Services.
- Supported Employment Vendors
- Social Security Administration Ticket to Work
- Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission

## 2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

ARS is the lead agency for the Arkansas Assistive Technology (AT) program. AT initiatives supported through the Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) program include device demonstration, loan, and reutilization activities. ARS also has administrative responsibility for the Alternative Financing Program (AFP) that provides low interest rate, extended term loans for the purchase of assistive technology.

## 3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

ARS has no cooperative agreements with programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture. The ARS field program provides information and contact names to potential clients that may qualify for SNAP benefits. Additionally, ARS field offices collaborate with local SNAP liaisons to provide updates to field staff on SNAP processes.

## 4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

ARS maintains an active presence on numerous councils and committees, including:

- Arkansas Workforce Development Boards (state and local)
- Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council
- SoundStARt
- The Arkansas Independent Living Council
- The Governor’s Commission on People with Disabilities

- Arkansas Trauma Rehabilitation Program
- Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition
- Disability:IN – Arkansas

#### 5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

ARS has no state use contracting programs.

#### D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

##### 1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

A pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) counselor and a Transition counselor are assigned to high schools in the state. Counselors provide direct services to students in the school setting under the core service categories for Pre-ETS, and they provide counseling and guidance on moving into transition services, fully affording students both knowledge and the means to enter into the vocational rehabilitation program.

In order for Pre-ETS to be provided in the school setting, an application for services must be completed by the entity proposing to provide services. The application must be reviewed and approved by a selection committee. Next, an agreement to operate within the school system is developed and approved by all parties. Pre-ETS require monthly reporting by the vendor, prior approval of the curriculum, and monitoring by ARS and the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) with collaboration and input from the local school officials.

Additionally, ARS has developed a plan to partner with school systems to provide Opportunities for Work-Based Learning (OWL). School systems complete proposals to provide services, which delineate Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and WIOA responsibilities. The partnership includes measurable criteria, a reporting structure, and a monitoring guideline.

The following are the responsibilities of ARS and DSB regarding transition planning and vocational rehabilitation services for eligible youth:

1. Designate vocational rehabilitation personnel to be responsible for the provision of technical assistance, consultation, and the development of statewide program strategies and procedures applicable for youth with disabilities and those eligible for 504 plans.
2. Facilitate the identification of youth with disabilities who may benefit from vocational rehabilitation services as early as possible, but no later than the academic year in which the student turns 16.
3. Make relevant data available about eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services and track information about employment outcomes for youth with disabilities.
4. Assign vocational rehabilitation counseling personnel to develop relationships with LEAs to formalize collaborative approaches to student outreach and transition planning and referral development and tracking.

5. Make LEA personnel, students, and their families aware of the vocational rehabilitation program, including VR eligibility requirements (in accordance with 34 CFR 361.42), and the application procedures and scope of services (in accordance with 34 CFR 361.48) that are provided to all eligible or potentially eligible individuals.
6. Provide the core Pre-ETS to eligible and potentially eligible students with signed parent/guardian consent.

### **Procedures for Timely Development and Approval of Individualized Plans for Employment for Transition Students**

The process for moving students into transition for the development and approval of an Individualized Plan for Employment includes having the Pre-Employment Transition Counselor first identify the students that want to participate along with the parents/guardians that have given their approval. The Participation Agreement Form captures who would like to move forward with signatures of the student and the parent/guardian. These forms are given to the Regional Managers in the Fall Semester of the Senior year, no later than December 1st for assignment to Transition Counselors. Next, a meeting is scheduled by the Pre-ETS Counselor for the Transition Counselor, Pre-ETS Counselor, Parent/Guardian, Student, and School staff. The IEP is reviewed along with the student's progress in Pre-ETS services. This meeting is to explain the process, services, and the documents required in order for the student to apply for VR Transition services.

The party responsible for the student (parent/guardian/student) will be provided with a flyer that describes the steps of the VR process and the documentation needed to initiate the process. In some cases, students may not have social security cards or state issued identification cards. At this time applications and information are provided in order to obtain these documents. The Pre-Employment Transition Counselor will facilitate obtaining the documents needed to make a seamless referral to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for Transition.

In order for the Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Counselor to move forward with an application, certain documentation is needed. The Pre-Employment Transition Counselor assists in providing a smooth referral process by giving clear copies of the following documents to the receiving counselor:

1. Demographic Form
2. Driver's License or State Identification Card
3. Social Security Card
4. Disability Information (IEP, 504, or medical record)
5. Social Security Benefits Awards Letter
6. Income information (if available)

These items along with the complete referral packet is given to the receiving counselor. The Pre-Employment Transition Counselor then documents the date of referral. Students will have Individualized Plans for Employment completed prior to graduation in May of each year when cases are transferred in this manner by December 1st.

### **Pre-ETS Students and Section 511**

ARS has developed forms and processes to delineate that the required services and documentation are provided prior to entry into a subminimum wage situation.

Counselors contact each school they are assigned to at the beginning of the school year (1st semester of school) to inquire if any families or educators have identified their students as a potential candidate for sub-minimum wage/sheltered work. If a student is seeking subminimum wage, or if it is unknown whether or not the student could benefit from competitive integrated employment, the Pre-Employment Transition Counselor meets with the student and parent or guardian to provide informed choice and career counseling.

The counselors work with the high school transition team, the student, and their family to gather documentation of the transition services the student receives while participating in high school. This documentation will demonstrate the student's ability to participate in competitive integrated employment.

Students are afforded work-based learning through Pre-Employment Transition and should they require additional supports to participate, they are moved into trial work to utilize Employment 1st Discovery or Supported Employment where they experience a variety of work situations. An eligibility determination can be made once these processes have had sufficient time and variety to allow the student to work.

If a student has participated in Pre-Employment Transition with ARS and/or through transition services offered by the school and there is clear and convincing evidence that the student is not a candidate for competitive integrated employment, the counselor will gather the documentation (Individualized Education Plan, Transition Plan, Pre-employment Services Progress Reports, and/or the ARS Work Experience Progress Reports) and the appropriate forms will be signed and disseminated.

ARS forms require clear and convincing supporting documentation regarding a decision on the student's ability to benefit in competitive integrated employment, signatures be obtained of all parties involved, all documents are presented at least 45 days after completion, that the method of transmission is documented, and that career counseling is again provided within 30 days of case closure.

### **Age for Pre-Employment Transition Services**

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Services for the Blind Arkansas have agreed to begin Pre-Employment Transition Services at age 16 through age 21.

## **2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:**

### **A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;**

ARS has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE SEU) for students in public schools. The parties agree to participate in technical assistance and in-service training to assist educational agencies in planning and coordinating services to ensure eligible individuals receive timely and appropriate supports and services. ARS Transition policy requires counselors to engage school personnel to generate student referrals and to develop an IPE for each student determined eligible. ADE is financially responsible for the delivery and coordination of secondary education as set forth through IDEA. ARS is responsible for coordinating Pre-ETS, taking applications, determining eligibility, and providing vocational rehabilitation services for individuals determined eligible for transition

services. The Memorandum of Understanding between the agencies was signed by the Department of Education, Special Education Unit on 12/13/17, by the Commissioner of ARS on 1/11/18, and the Division of Services for the Blind on 1/30/18. It went into effect on 1/30/18 when the last party signed.

ARS participates in the state level Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP). AITP is a task-force made up of representatives of state agencies, including ARS, DSB, ADE SEU – Arkansas Transition Services, the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, DHS-Division of Adult, Aging and Behavioral Health Services, and parent advocates.

#### Consultation and Technical Assistance

In order to improve the transition of students with disabilities from school to postsecondary education and employment, ARS and DSB support the following transition services to vocational rehabilitation personnel, the ADE SEU, and the local education agencies by:

1. Providing instruction to vocational rehabilitation counselors, school transition personnel, and other persons supporting students with disabilities through group conferences, instructional materials and guidelines, reporting forms, webinar training, and telephone/email communications.
2. Coordinating public speaking and training activities on transition services provided by local education agencies under IDEA.
3. Developing model transition demonstration projects, and establishing or supporting partnerships involving the local education agencies to achieve the goals of improved transition outcomes.
4. Expanding Pre-ETS in schools throughout the State and at the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC). ARS transformed the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) to a new service delivery model, ACDC. This model focuses as a hub for training and services to support VR consumers and/or students with disabilities to successfully reach the milestones of their individual plans for employment.

ARS, LEAs, ADE, and VR service providers receive intensive technical assistance and professional development from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) on topics like implementing evidence-based practices and preparing graduates for success in postsecondary education and employment.

#### **B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;**

ARS provides eligibility determination according to ARS policy, and consultation and technical assistance to educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services when requested and appropriate. ARS counselors meet with special education teachers during the school year and provide information to schools about VR services, and ensure schools have appropriate forms and information for students to apply for services. ARS works with schools to assist the student with significant disabilities in identifying, selecting, and pursuing appropriate career objectives.

Partner high schools agree to work cooperatively with ARS to provide appropriate transition services to students to equip them for entry into the workforce, postsecondary education or training, and independent living. Schools carry out all required transition planning provisions

mandated by the IDEA and state regulations, conduct regular staff development training regarding transition requirements and include ARS counselors in the training when appropriate, provide referrals to counselors, provide private space for counselors to meet with students, include counselors in students Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings with authorization by parents or guardians and student knowledge, communicate regularly with counselors, and provide copies of school records.

ARS provides accommodations as needed to aid in successful completion of the vocational education program for VR eligible youth in accordance with their respective IPEs, unless these accommodations are the responsibility of the LEA pursuant to Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) regulations. ARS provides technical assistance to local education agencies to ensure all youth and students have equal educational opportunities to participate in programs, activities, and job opportunities, and to analyze, identify, and change policies and activities that impede the achievement of equal opportunities for all individuals.

**C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;**

The Interagency Agreement between the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit – Arkansas Transition Services, Division of Career and Technical Education, and ARS defines each party's responsibilities with regard to ensuring FAPE for eligible students, ages 16-21, and younger when appropriate, which are identified as having a disability in accordance with IDEA.

ADE SEU, ARS, and DSB jointly agree to the following:

1. The ADE SEU is the agency responsible for ensuring that FAPE is made available to eligible students pursuant to IDEA (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(1).
2. School districts have the primary planning, programmatic, and financial responsibilities for the provision of education transition services and related services for students as a component of FAPE and these services are provided to eligible students with disabilities, ages 16 to 21, and younger when determined appropriate through the implementation of the IEP. The parties acknowledge ADE SEU has general supervisory responsibility over the educational program of any public agency providing FAPE to individuals with disabilities, ages birth to 21, as defined in state and federal statutes.
3. The distinction between transition and related services that are the planning, programmatic, and financial responsibility of the school district is determined based on a delineation of the customary services the school provides under IDEA Part B. These distinctions describe the activities, supports, and funding ARS provides to support Pre-ETS in partner school settings or during the school day.
4. ARS is financially responsible for providing Pre-ETS to students who meet the definition of students with a disabilities as defined by WIOA. ARS works cooperatively to ensure individuals with disabilities have access to the training and necessary supports to transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary activities, including but not limited to vocation training and employment, and completing an IPE before leaving the school setting. ARS agrees the student and/or designated party has choice in the development of the IPE.

**D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.**



ARS counselors attend IEP and transition planning meetings, career fairs, back to school nights, group orientations, and transition fairs, and make presentations to schools and families throughout the year with partner agencies like Arkansas Transition Services, Department of Youth Services, Department of Human Services, Adult Education, Workforce Services and the Division of Services for the Blind. ARS collaborates with partner agencies through shared recruiting and the application processes for special programs outreach. These outreach efforts provide creative programs like the Youth Leadership Forum, the Inclusion Film Camp, the Transition Employment Program, and the Opportunities for Work-Based Learning Program in order to identify students and get them interested in work and in participating in the full array of transition services. Additionally, ARS goes directly to educational settings in Department of Youth Services facilities, where youth who are at-risk are identified and provided Pre-ETS, as well as given an opportunity to apply for full vocational rehabilitation services. ARS also provides brochures and introductory meetings to explain what Project SEARCH can offer youth seeking permanent employment outcomes.

ARS works directly with the schools and community partners to provide education on Pre-ETS and Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Transition stakeholders and partners participate in NTACT's sponsored capacity building activities, such as The Capacity Building Institute and related regional and/or national meetings. Arkansas utilizes a state implementation team to support personnel development opportunities for Arkansas educators and service providers. The implementation team participates in data review, problem solving, and strategic planning that informs personnel development opportunities.

### **Referral Process and Parental Consent**

Pre-ETS counselors directly assigned to the school provide Pre-ETS referral packets to all students and schools. Students who are interested complete the referral packet with their parent/guardian with assistance from the Pre-ETS counselor. The Referral packet includes:

1. Cover Letter
2. Pre-ETS Referral Form
3. Informed Consent/Release of Information – This form is required to be signed and uploaded in the electronic case file prior to the initiation of services.
4. Benefits Planning Consent Form (if applicable)
5. Social Security Administration 3288 Consent Form (if applicable)

### **Number of Potentially Eligible in the State**

Each year in September ARS requests a data pull from the Arkansas Office of Information Technology, which provides a total count of students aged 16-21 in the state on Individual Education Plans and on 504 plans within the public school system.

### **Set-aside Process for Authorized Activities**

ARS utilizes the WINTAC guidance formula for determining the total amount of funds that can be expended on authorized activities. First, ARS uses the WINTAC formula to find the cost per student on coordination and core services using the financial information for this fiscal year.

Using Office of Information Technology statistics, we locate the total number of students in the system who could be potentially eligible and divide that by the total amount of money spent on

core and coordination services. That total cost is divided by the total of potential students to calculate a cost per student. Because we have no clear documentation that can show what percentage refuse services, we leave this amount at 0%. Then the total number of students is multiplied by the cost per student. That number is subtracted by the total of our 15% set-aside.

It is important to note that as a result of completing this exercise for the 2018-2019 school year, the projected total cost per student was \$172.00, much lower than what ARS should spend to provide a quality service with enough time investment to impact students in a positive way. For this reason, ARS made the decision to focus on core and coordination activities for expenditures to the 15% in the future.

#### E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

ARS requires potential vendors to complete an application process and provide required credentialing to become an approved vendor. ARS contracts with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) utilizing Purchased Service Agreements. All vendors are required to meet standards to ensure VR clients achieve acceptable employment outcomes, and vendors are compensated based on performance outcomes.

The CRP contract outlines the specific employment services to be provided and the available compensation, which is outcome based fees per service with the total funding available. The service component varies per vendor dependent on their ability to provide the service. CRPs may provide only job placement services (Referral, Job Development/Placement and Closure.) Others may provide Employment First services (Discovery, Employment Path, Job Development/Placement, and Closure), Supported Employment (Referral, Job Development/Placement, Stabilization and Closure) and Individual Job Coaching Services. The contract describes the objectives/scope of the service(s), and performance standards for competitive integrated employment. The contract has separate attachments related to service description, outcome per service, funding grid, and an attachment identifying the performance deliverables and the performance indicators requiring expansion of employment opportunities and successful outcomes to individuals with disabilities. The contract defines continued funding may be based on successful outcomes.

#### F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

ARS maintains cooperative agreements/contracts with private non-profit and for profit CRPs, which define the requirements for the provision of supported employment (SE) services and extended services. The cooperative agreements/contracts include commitments by the CRP to fund extended services for a period of time as needed by the client and the employer for successful employment.

ARS maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Human Services - Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) in which DDS agrees to pay for extended services for clients who receive Medicaid waiver services after ARS has closed the case as successfully employed.

#### G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

##### 1. VR SERVICES; AND

The Business Engagement Unit (BEU) is responsible for employer outreach. The BEU builds relationships with employers to identify and provide solutions to assist businesses in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent, and provides

disability awareness and sensitivity training. The BEU provides counselors with information about labor market, job vacancies, skills necessary to obtain jobs in high-demand occupations, and earning potential and advancement opportunities in various occupations to increase opportunities for achieving competitive integrated employment.

ARS works with Career Workforce and Local Workforce Boards to identify potential skill deficits that may act as barriers to employment, and identifies the most appropriate training to assist clients in obtaining employment.

ARS provides presentations, evaluation, expertise, and assistance to counselors, their clients, employers, and employees with disabilities in the provision of accommodations to facilitate successful vocational outcomes through the AT@Work and Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs.

The AT@Work program is designed to assist ARS clients and referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in selecting and obtaining the appropriate assistive technology to facilitate the achievement of the clients' established vocational goals and attain successful, competitively integrated employment outcomes. Services through the AT@Work program include assistive technology and accommodation evaluation and assessment, assistive technology device selection and procurement, training and technical assistance, as well as occupational abilities assessments. These services are primarily directed as it relates to education, school, training programs, vocational and technical education programs, and job retention efforts. AT@Work is a statewide program staffed by Occupational Therapists and an Accommodations Specialist.

The SAW/RTW program is designed to provide support to employers and employees when an employee is experiencing an injury or illness that results in a disabling condition, inhibiting the employee from remaining at work or returning to work as soon as it is safe and medically feasible. Program staff include a SAW/RTW coordinator and an administrative assistant. They can also recruit the assistance of evaluation staff located in the AT@Work program. SAW/RTW provides access to professionals who have expertise in the areas of: Vocational counseling to assist an employee in the process of adjusting to a disability and the importance of remaining positive as it relates to stay-at-work/return-to-work efforts; specialized vocational assessments that help identify an employee's vocational strengths and weaknesses as it relates to successful job performance; job site assessment to determine how an employee's presenting disability interferes with task performance and with the identification of potential modifications to the work environment; job analysis to identify the specific functions of a job and the mental and/or physical requirements needed for successful job performance; and individualized employee training regarding the correct use of any new technology or equipment introduced to assist in work performance. Staff can also provide general ergonomic assessments and training targeted toward employees in jobs that may present the likelihood of occurrence of injury or illness that leads to disability.

The SAW/RTW coordinator works with the employee and the employer to develop a SAW/RTW plan that, if required, addresses the need for accommodation in the workplace; identifies successful performance indicators with employer assistance; outlines the process to return or maintain the employee's employment; or after investigation may determine potential assignments for transitional employment.

## **2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.**

ARS provides and/or procures transition services including Pre-ETS for students and youth with disabilities through community rehabilitation programs that place students into paid work

experiences with a variety of employers throughout the state or directly with employers, depending on the vocational interests of the student or youth. Employers facilitate opportunities in group settings and individually with job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, and workplace readiness training. Employers are also contracted to provide on-the-job training experiences, job placement, supported employment, and customized employment opportunities. ARS provides assistive technology assessments and training to assist students transitioning from school to postsecondary or to vocational training or to work.

## H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

### 1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

The Arkansas Department of Human Services operates the State Medicaid program. ARS, the State Medicaid program, and other agencies have in place an interagency agreement that delineates roles and responsibilities related to sequential funding for combined waiver programs for individuals participating in employment related activities under WIOA. ARS, the State Medicaid program, and the other agencies collaborate on the Arkansas' Employment First and State Agency Model Employer initiatives.

ARS, along with DHS – Medicaid, Developmental Disabilities Services, and Aging, Adult and Behavioral Health Services, through a Memorandum of Understanding and collaborative efforts have received technical assistance through EconoSys (Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Program) to enhance employment opportunities since 2015. Most recently the technical assistance has orchestrated Subject Matter Experts (SME) to assist with State Agency as Model Employer (SAME), to begin planning for the expansion of Employment First, and to enhance supported employment for individuals with behavioral health concerns.

Since 2019, the SME for SAME has assisted this partnership in hosting training sessions with state human resource managers educating them on SAME and by helping them to see that individuals with disabilities can be a part of the talent pool of job seekers. Ten individuals with developmental disabilities remain employed from the 2018 pilot in extra help positions working within state agencies. Two individuals have been employed permanently with the State. The DHS/Developmental Disabilities Services created the process for using extra help positions with services provided through ARS supported employment for on-the-job supports, stabilization in their positions, and extended services funded by Medicaid. In 2020, the SAME technical assistance plan is to create a Round Table of State Directors to develop a strategic plan for changing the state HR hiring practices for individuals with disabilities to become employed either through permanent state positions or extra help. The state unit has received support from the Governor's Office and the state Office of Personnel Management. The SME will continue to provide training opportunities through PowerPoints, webinars, and onsite visits.

he Arkansas state team collaborated with the SME to show solidarity for Employment First, to identify employment as a choice for all individuals with disabilities with a focus primarily on individuals with behavioral health concerns. In 2019, the technical assistance plan focused on educating the state leaders in the behavioral health agency on employment/supported employment as part of the recovery plan for individuals with behavioral health concerns through evidence based practices called Individual Placement and Supports (IPS.) As Arkansas transitioned the Medicaid Waiver services from DHS to organized care through the Arkansas Provider-led Shared Savings Entities, referred to as the PASSE, the efforts related to moving this initiative forward slowed. The SME and team trained the PASSE supervisor on supported employment for individuals with behavioral health concerns in late summer of 2019, who

supports these new services. In 2020, the technical assistance plan focus is on identifying the types of services to be offered to individuals with behavioral health concerns, and the continued education of the PASSE staff, vocational rehabilitation staff, and behavioral health entities with the desired outcome of initiating one pilot program.

## 2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

The Department of Human Services – Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) is responsible for providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities. ARS, DDS, and other agencies collaborate on Arkansas' Employment First and State Agency Model Employer initiatives. ARS, DDS, and the other agencies have in place an interagency agreement that delineates roles and responsibilities related to sequential funding for combined waiver programs for individuals participating in employment related activities under WIOA.

## 3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

The Department of Human Services – Division of Adult, Aging and Behavioral Health Services (DAABHS) is responsible for providing mental health services. ARS, DAABHS, and other agencies have in place an interagency agreement that delineates roles and responsibilities related to sequential funding for combined waiver programs for individuals participating in employment related activities under WIOA. ARS, DAABHS and the other agencies collaborate on Arkansas' Employment First and State Agency Model Employer initiatives.

## I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

### 1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

#### A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

#### I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

ARS currently is serving 14,662 clients and employs a total of 307 staff.

#### **Access and Accommodation – (Total 8)**

Administration – 2

Evaluation – 4

Administrative Support – 1

Extra Help – 1

#### **ACDC – (Total 56)**

Administration – 6

Counseling – 7

Training – 18

Evaluation (RIDAC and LEC) – 16

Other (Maintenance, Engineering, Security Skilled Trade, Equipment Tech) – 4

Administrative Support – 5

Extra Help – 0

#### **Field Services – (Total 186)**

Managers – 13

Counselors – 91  
BERs – 11  
Administrative Support – 68  
Extra Help – 3

**Central Office – (Total 57)**

Commissioner's Office – 4  
Field Administration – 5  
PPD&E – 11  
IT – 2  
Finance – 12  
Communication – 3  
HR – 7  
Administrative Support – 8  
Extra Help – 5

II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE  
VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

**Access and Accommodation – (Total 12)**

Administration – 4  
Evaluation – 6  
Administrative Support – 1  
Extra Help – 1

**ACDC – (Total 57)**

Administration – 7  
Counseling – 7  
Training – 18  
Evaluation (RIDAC and LEC) – 16  
Other (Maintenance, Engineering, Security Skilled Trade, Equipment Tech) – 4  
Administrative Support – 5  
Extra Help – 0

**Field Services – (Total 204)**

Managers – 13  
Counselors – 95  
BERs – 13  
Administrative Support – 80  
Extra Help – 3

**Central Office – (Total 69)**

Commissioner's Office – 4  
Field Administration – 7  
PPD&E – 11  
IT – 2  
Finance – 13  
Communication – 4  
HR – 9  
Administrative Support – 8  
Extra Help – 10

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

**Access and Accommodation – (Total 12)**

Administration – 4

Evaluation – 6

Administrative Support – 1

Extra Help – 1

**ACDC – (Total 57)**

Administration – 7

Counseling – 7

Training – 18

Evaluation (RIDAC and LEC) – 16

Other (Maintenance, Engineering, Security Skilled Trade, Equipment Tech) – 4

Administrative Support – 5

Extra Help – 0

**Field Services – (Total 204)**

Managers – 13

Counselors – 95

BERs – 13

Administrative Support – 80

Extra Help – 3

**Central Office – (Total 69)**

Commissioner's Office – 4

Field Administration – 7

PPD&E – 11

IT – 2

Finance – 13

Communication – 4

HR – 9

Administrative Support – 8

Extra Help – 10

**B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT**

**I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;**

Currently, the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas – Little Rock provide degrees in rehabilitation counseling. ARS monitors student enrollment in vocational rehabilitation and related programs at each institution by category, the number of students currently enrolled, the number of students graduating the previous year, and certification or licensure. ARS works with the institutions to provide internship and practicum opportunities, and notifies the universities when job openings become available.

**II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND**

- University of Arkansas – Fayetteville MRC — 23 (FT) and 3 (PT)
- University of Arkansas – Little Rock MRC — 78 (FT) and 103 (PT)

### III. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

- University of Arkansas – Fayetteville MRC — 17 (FT) and 3 (PT)
- University of Arkansas – Little Rock MRC — 29 (No distinction between FT/PT)

## 2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

ARS focuses on the successful recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel, and maintains a working relationship with colleges, universities, and higher education programs within the state. ARS provides information about agency benefits such as tuition assistance and loan forgiveness to partner universities that have vocational rehabilitation programs.

ARS maintains staff liaisons with the university programs at the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville, the University of Arkansas – Little Rock, the University of Arkansas – Pine Bluff, and Arkansas Tech University, and meets quarterly with the universities to provide vocational rehabilitation field updates, and to give practitioner input.

The agency actively recruits minorities and students with disabilities, and encourages students to join professional rehabilitation organizations such as the National Rehabilitation Association and the National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns. These rehabilitation professional organizations provide scholarship opportunities to individuals, including minorities, who major in the field of rehabilitation.

ARS partners in job fairs, maintains a positive relationship with the community and its representatives, and utilizes online recruitment efforts.

ARS provides staff training, especially to those providing direct services to clients. Professional qualifications for counselors are monitored to ensure current certification and to track educational progress for those achieving certification.

## 3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

### A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

The State of Arkansas has no established standards that apply to the VR counselor position. However, ARS has a goal for all rehabilitation counseling positions to meet the Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling with Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) standard. The agency seeks to hire MRC/CRC counselors as a first priority. In situations where the agency is unable to recruit and hire an MRC/CRC, ARS has a minimum hiring standard of a master's or doctoral degree in a field of study related to vocational rehabilitation counseling or a baccalaureate degree in a field of study reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation plus a minimum of one year of demonstrated work or service experience in a vocational rehabilitation setting.



Individuals employed as counselors who have not achieved the MRC/CRC designation or standard are provided ongoing training to prepare for the CRC and/or MRC.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The Deputy Chief of Field Services reviews curriculum for Rehabilitation Counseling higher education programs and provides input on current educational needs for incoming counselors.

The ARS Commissioner is a member of the WIOA Board, the Chief of Field Services is a member of the executive WIOA Committee, and rehab area managers are members of the local workforce boards. These individuals provide updates on labor force initiatives at both the state and local levels to agency personnel. They also have the responsibility of educating other board members about the needs of individuals with disabilities.

#### 4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

Staff is provided training opportunities through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association Training Conference, Special Topics Training, Administrative Assistants Training Conference, online training, and webinars. Training is also available through the state Interagency Training Agency, the University of Arkansas CURRENTS program, CRC training, CEU training for purposes of certification or licensure in the professions, and training provided internally by the agency in case management and policy and procedures compliance.

Employees have opportunities to complete the Facilitating Career Development program through the National Career Development Association, which provides relevant skills and knowledge to assist clients in planning careers and obtaining meaningful work.

Access and Accommodations works with counselors in collaboration with ICAN and community partners to provide training about assistive technology and related programs and services available to clients to assist in the home, at work, or in school.

B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

While findings from the 2019 CSNA indicated the leadership team is very well-trained and boasts an excellent core group of field counselors, there is a need for training throughout the organization, but in particular for counselors in the areas of serious mental health issues and autism. The survey team recommended ARS give a higher level of concentration to training needs, and use survey methods to identify training needs for each employee level. The CSNA also indicated employees feel the agency leadership could do a better job of communicating with rank and file staff. Staff was often unaware of changes even when those changes affected their work directly.

The agency enables employees to attend classes, seminars, and conferences, and disseminates information through newsletters, in-service training, workshops, and conferences. The field program conducts monthly area meetings. Topics include the latest techniques for providing services to clients, updates on statewide performance measures, and guidance on other WIOA initiatives. The field program has outlined four regional trainings to address chronic mental illness and autism topics, which will enable counselors to increase their knowledge and better understand mental health identifiers, treatment, and medications, and better understand support systems for individuals with autism. Additionally, field staff will have access to seminars, conferences, and in-service training on mental health and autism topics.

#### 5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

ARS provides access and contracts as needed to employ personnel who communicate in the native languages of applicants and clients with limited English speaking ability. ARS also provides special communication modes such as interpreters, captioned videos, specialized telecommunications services, and materials for individuals who are deaf and deaf-blind, as well as other specialized media systems for individuals with disabilities. Interpreters are provided for the deaf or hearing impaired. Sign language skills are included as a minimum qualification for positions providing services to persons who are deaf or hearing impaired.

#### 6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

ARS staff participates in state, regional, and national transition meetings and conferences. ARS Field Program staff serves on the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP) Team and attends the annual National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) Conference. In addition, they help plan, coordinate, and facilitate the bi-annual State Transition Summit, and help lead the planning and coordination of local transition fairs and parent's nights with assistance from rehab area managers and local VR counselors. AITP promotes personnel development through online training for teachers, students, and families, and through an annual Summer Agency Connection, which includes ARS rehab area managers, ACTI, Access and Accommodations personnel, and representatives from high schools. AITP maintains a directory of services provided by ARS and other stakeholders.

#### J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

##### 1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

##### A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

The most recent Arkansas Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment was completed in April 2019. ARS contracted with the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville who worked collaboratively with the State Rehabilitation Council, key stakeholders, and ARS to survey the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Arkansas. Multiple data gathering strategies were used including focus group discussions with clients and participants from ARS, SRC, key stakeholders, vendors, employers, and ACDC administrators and staff, and structured surveys were sent to all ARS counselors, a random sample of clients, employers, and ARS leadership.

#### Findings

Individuals with the most significant disabilities were the largest underserved group, and supported employment and transition services were consistently listed as most needed services.

#### Recommendations

- ARS should continue to work across departments and agencies to increase funding for the provision of supported employment and transition services.
- ARS should increase training for CRPs, specifically to address the fear families have about the loss of benefits when individuals achieve competitive integrated employment.
- ARS should explore ways for CRPs to play a more vital role in providing supported employment services across the state.

#### B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

##### Findings

Hispanic/Latino clients who do not speak English as a first language were identified as needing interpreters provided by ARS, in order to ensure that counselor-client communications are effective.

##### Recommendation

- ARS must make stronger efforts to locate interpreters who will be available for applicants who do not use English as their primary language.

#### C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

##### Findings

Data collected through focus groups as well as online surveys revealed that racial and ethnic minorities experienced barriers when seeking VR services. Certain geographic areas were considered underserved, including the Delta Region counties, the Southeast quadrant of the state, and some counties in Northeast Arkansas.

##### Recommendations

- ARS must pursue the expansion of services to geographically underserved areas of the state as well as the underserved populations.
- ARS must expand its outreach to these populations to overcome a lack of trust in state government, which is common in the underserved geographic regions.

##### Findings regarding Center for Independent Living

Arkansas' Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are required to provide five core services: peer support, information and referral, individual and systems advocacy, independent living skills training, and transition. There are four CILs operating in the state located in Fayetteville (SOURCES), Little Rock (Mainstream Living), Whitehall (Delta Resources), and Hot Springs (SAILS). CILs work hard to provide outreach and to serve individuals from outlying areas who are most in need, but they only cover 25 of the 75 counties in Arkansas.

The CILs work cooperatively and maintain courteous relationships, but have very few collaborative programs. The CILs advocate strongly for their clients; however, there is little intentional integration between CILs and the VR system. For example, counselors were unaware

that one Center provides transition services in public schools in their service area, and both counselors and rehab area managers were unaware that SOURCES manages the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) grant and employs five Community Work Incentive Coordinators throughout the state to provide benefits counseling.

The CILs provide excellent services and embrace the philosophy people with disabilities are the experts on their needs, and therefore, they must take the initiative, individually and collectively, in designing and promoting better solutions, and must organize themselves to work together for those solutions. To fully live in this philosophy, Arkansas' CILs must work more closely together to advocate for expanded IL services in Arkansas.

#### Recommendations

- CILs should work with the VR system and specifically with ARS to become a fully integrated and intentional partner with the agency. There are a number of valuable services provided by the CILs not fully understood by the agency; when there is understanding and collaboration, it is too often centered with senior management and is not known or understood by the rank and file counselors and staff across the state.
- A CIL representative should be a member of the State Rehabilitation Council. It is not enough to have a SILC representative on the council, since the CILs and SILC are separate and distinct entities.
- CILs should work closely with ARS and act as advocates for additional funding to operationalize a fifth CIL in the state. It is not acceptable to have the majority of Arkansas' counties located outside of a CIL service area.

#### D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

#### Findings

ARS has taken a leadership role in developing and maintaining partnerships with WIOA partners. The creation and ongoing review of the WIOA state plan is one example of the collaboration and cooperation among the partners. However, the most frequently stated concern with the Workforce/ARS partnership revolves around the "no wrong door" concept, which hinges on the development of a common intake system. Workforce applicants with disabilities, who are transferred to co-located ARS counselors, provide duplicative information to initiate the ARS application, since the two agencies have not developed a common intake system. The ARS IT staff continue to work for a better system.

#### Recommendations

- ARS leadership should continue to take a leadership role in the WIOA partnership efforts.
- ARS should push for the development of a shared database to eliminate the significant workload added to ARS counselors and support staff to duplicate information already provided by the consumer to a WIOA partner.

#### E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

#### Findings

ARS provides transition and Pre-ETS services across the state, and meets the WIOA requirement to utilize at least 15% of the state's VR funding to provide Pre-ETS to support youth with disabilities in transition from secondary school to postsecondary school and employment. ARS recruits and contracts with CRPs and willing public school districts.

### Recommendations

- ARS must take a leadership role in bringing Transition partners fully on board.
- 2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

### Findings

It has taken several years for Community Rehabilitation Programs in Arkansas to accept and embrace the need to meet federal and state guidelines as outlined in Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act; however, they now are working to become compliant by providing access to mandated career counseling and information and referral services to their program participants, and by working with the ARS monitoring unit.

If ARS is to successfully meet the needs of individuals who have significant disabilities throughout the state, the network of CRPs will be critical partners. The agency has done a good job of communicating the new requirements and of setting deadlines for their implementation, but this is just the first step in the process. Initiating the second step in the transformation of the CRP network is no less important to the provision of needed services. It is imperative for ARS to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and support within the CRP network.

### Recommendations

- ARS and representatives from the CRPs should meet and work together to create a path forward for these programs. Potential service additions and changes must meet the expanding needs of Arkansas' citizens with disabilities as defined by ARS, while providing an expanded array of services and funding options for CRPs. Opportunities for CRPs include:
- Expanded Supported Employment services for individuals with significant disabilities. ARS can assume a more active role in the development of additional funding sources for initial Supported Employment services as well as long-term supports when needed. Possible partnerships with DDS should be sought.
- Expanded School to Work Transition and Pre-ETS opportunities. ARS' challenge is to explore ways to utilize CRPs to expand these services. One example is for CRPs to partner in the OWL program.
- Partnering with the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC) to provide training and certification programs in local communities. ACDC staff would be responsible for maintaining certifications for existing programs, as well as expanding those offerings as resources warrant, and for monitoring the training services provided in the communities. CRP staff could provide the hands-on, day-to-day supports to help clients master the training ACDC provides.
- Additional training programs for CRP staff. ARS should work with CRPs to identify specific training needs and then develop and make available training presentations in affordable and accessible formats in local communities.

### Findings regarding Arkansas Career Training Institute

ACTI had a dedicated staff who worked hard to seek and earn national certifications for their program offerings. ACTI leadership actively explored apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In addition, ACTI staff established and provided innovative programs for transition-aged youth including the Transition Employment Program (TEP). This comprehensive pre-employment training service provided Arkansas high school students with disabilities who have completed the 11th grade with job exploration counseling, work-based learning opportunities, counseling on postsecondary opportunities, and instruction in self-advocacy. In just a few short years, the enrollment in the TEP has grown and has proven to be an excellent tool for motivating students to think more broadly about their options after high school.

However, downsides to operating ACTI under a twenty-four hour, residential model were identified: the distance clients travelled from most areas of the state to attend ACTI; the long waiting periods for acceptance and enrollment; the perception in the local communities that ACTI did not accept referrals who have significant disabilities; and ACTI's annual budget, which was approximately one-third of the total ARS services budget.

### Recommendations regarding Arkansas Career Training Institute

In response to these findings, ACTI began transformation into ACDC. One of the major changes with this transformation was the elimination of the residential component and consolidating of central services away from the main campus located at 105 Reserve Street in Hot Springs to 200 Reserve Street in Hot Springs. The consolidation of equipment, personnel, and other resources necessitated the need for some renovation of the Armory Building located at 200 Reserve Street along with the construction of a structure to support welding training.

The new model used at ACDC is focused on four program areas:

- *Vocational Rehabilitation Support Services*
- *Career and Technical Education Programs*
- *Pre-Employment Career Development and Transition Services*
- *Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship*

**Vocational Rehabilitation Support Services:** These services are needed to provide evaluation of students to ensure their educational goals are attainable. In addition, staff members will provide detailed information to students with disabilities about training, education, and career opportunities. This will assist the students and their VR counselors across the state to develop better individual plans for employment. In addition, it will assist with referrals for individuals with disabilities that are currently working in sub-minimum wage, with training, education, and career options available that lead to competitive integrated employment.

**Career and Technical Education Programs:** The programs are needed to provide skills and knowledge to people with disabilities to help them achieve competitive integrated employment. A brief description of the training area is listed below:

- **Customer Service and Retail.** This program covers the basic aspect of careers in retail with a focus on customer service. In addition, there is a retail lab and externship developed jointly with CVS pharmacy. Students completing this program will be prepared for jobs in retail and those requiring high levels of customer service. Also, it gives them access to industry specific training for jobs under the corporate umbrella of

CVS. It should be noted CVS is one of the largest health care/retail organizations in the world.

- **Construction Technology.** Home Repair and Maintenance: covers basic skills and techniques used in carpentry, plumbing, electricity, and other building trades. The optional module on electrical construction is a complete orientation to the electrical trade, giving students a competitive edge as an apprentice electrician.
- **Welding.** This program has two eight-week modules, which allow students to learn in-demand skills that lead to jobs in the construction and manufacturing sectors.
- **Environmental Services.** This three-week program provides fundamental training in environmental services and prepares students with the skills needed for entry level jobs in environmental services. Also, by stacking other training, they will be able to move from diverse careers in multiple industry sectors.
- **Automotive Maintenance Technology.** This eight-week program focuses on safety and routine maintenance items, tire repair, oil and filter service, belts, hoses and the like. It has been designed to allow students to enter the automotive workplace quickly and build skills on the job.
- **Culinary Arts.** This eight-week course is designed to train students as food service workers in cafeterias, hospitals, restaurants or other food service facilities. Students will follow a scheduled rotation that provides training in Food Safety, Personal Hygiene, Food Preparation, Ingredients, Dishwashing, and Proper Food Storage. This increases opportunities for competitive integrated employment of students with significant disabilities, as well as opens the door for internships and other employer-based training opportunities across the state.
- **Certified Nursing Assistant Training.** There are three, six and seven week options for this program depending on the classes. The classes provide students with the practical application of basic care skills and the required theory training for nursing assistants, per the rules and regulations of the Office of Long Term Care of Arkansas. In addition, the course articulates with a registered apprenticeship program, which provides an additional learn as you earn opportunity.

**Pre-Employment Career Development and Transition Services:** These services are needed to enhance knowledge of competitive integrated employment opportunities in the state and develop skills needed for employment or to further post-secondary education and training. With the passage of the WIOA, Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities is a required service to be coordinated with and provided to all high schools.

ACDC will provide and facilitate pre-employment transition services including career exploration and work-based learning. The areas include:

- ServSafe Food Handler Program
- Professional Guest Services
- Certified Production Technician
- Certified Logistics Technician
- OSHA 10-hour Outreach

- Security Guard

**Pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship:** ACDC has been working with several registered apprenticeship programs that are related to current career and technical education provided on campus. The property allows adequate space and opportunity to conduct pre-apprenticeship training for students to prepare for registered apprenticeship and careers in trades that are in demand in the state. The partnership with registered apprenticeship allows for greater opportunities for the students served on the property while limiting redundant education and training provided by local educational entities. This also has the added benefit of helping registered apprenticeship programs meet the requirement of 29 CFR 30.7, which requires programs to recruit and include people with disabilities.

ARS ceased operation of ACTI as a residential program to which selected individuals are referred, and adopted a different business model to provide an array of supports to individuals throughout the state that is fiscally sustainable. The new model is known as the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC).

ACTI transformed from a residential program housing a variety of training programs in one central location, to a team of experts facilitating training and credentialing programs across the state through CRPs, High Schools, and Core Workforce Partners. This “hub and spoke” model retains the core group of training staff and credentialing experts. By establishing the “hub and spoke” model, ACDC will provide an effective response to the three major negative viewpoints cited in this study. First, since these programs would be offered closer to home, individuals will no longer be forced to travel long distances and live in a residential setting to participate in ACDC certification programs. Second, the long waiting periods for acceptance and enrollment in ACTI programs would be eliminated. There should be an exponential increase in the number of individuals served by these certification programs through partnerships with the network of CRPs, High Schools and Core Workforce Partners, thereby reducing the waiting time for enrollment. Finally, the addition of hands-on support from well-trained CRP staffers to provide assistance to individuals enrolled in the local programs would make completion and certification accessible to individuals with more significant disabilities.

ACDC is seeking out and developing partnerships with existing CRPs throughout the state to create specific training programs similar to those currently being offered at the residential facility.

ACDC continues to develop and expand ancillary programs like TEP, and aggressively pursue apprenticeship programs that could be incorporated into the CRP, High School, and Core Workforce partnership model.

### 3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

#### Findings

ARS has worked diligently to provide transition and Pre-ETS services across the state, and has met the WIOA requirement that at least 15% of the state’s vocational rehabilitation funding be used to provide Pre-ETS to support youth with disabilities in transition from secondary school to postsecondary school and employment. ARS management and field staff have worked tirelessly to recruit CRPs and willing public school districts with whom to contract in order to meet the requirement. However, to meet the 15% benchmark quickly, ARS allowed some Pre-



ETS providers to pay students for “work experience” placements for as much as 20 hours per week. While this incentive worked well in terms of recruiting employers and providers, based on the estimated 17,700 individuals with disabilities who received supports in 2018 is not sustainable for the long term unless the total number of individuals served is reduced.

### Recommendations

- ARS leadership, in consultation with providers and school personnel, should set a lower number of hours for work experience. ARS must make some significant changes in order to continue an acceptable level of services. ARS partners, CRPs and school districts, have allowed some students to work as much as 20 hours per week, with ARS paying those wages, which is not sustainable, nor in line with best practices. The purpose of the Pre-ETS program is to provide paid work experience. It is not to create long term jobs for these students. A series of work site experiences, averaging eight hours per week, for an expanded number of students, would provide the desired workplace exposure. Adjustments must be made to the structure of the program to ensure its sustainability, and the sustainability and viability of the existing VR program.
- ARS must take a leadership role in bringing Transition partners fully on board.
- ARS should continue to negotiate with public schools and the Department of Education to increase the portion of transition costs paid through IDEA.

## K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

### 1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

In Arkansas, out of a total of 1,767,266 non-institutionalized population aged 18 to 64, there are 275,710 individuals with disabilities. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Table B18121: Work Experience by Disability Status and Type, from the 2018 American Community Survey.

### 2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

#### A. THE VR PROGRAM;

ARS estimates 16,700 eligible individuals with disabilities will receive vocational rehabilitation services and 3,000 youth will receive pre-employment transition services.

#### B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

ARS estimates 375 eligible individuals with disabilities will receive supported employment services.

#### C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is not under an Order of Selection.

### 3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is not under an Order of Selection.

### 4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services is \$13.9 million for VR services and \$6.7 million for pre-employment transition services. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is not under an Order of Selection.

#### L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

##### 1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

ARS and the State Rehabilitation Council developed and agreed upon goals and priorities based on the 2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment for PY2020-2021.

##### 2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

The purpose of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is to assist Arkansans with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment. The goals and priorities identified to support this purpose are:

#### **Goal 1: ARS will meet performance accountability measures as outlined in WIOA.**

##### Priorities:

- ARS will monitor established performance accountability measures.
- ARS will provide career counseling to 14(c) program participants to meet Section 511 requirements.
- ARS will strengthen data verification procedures.

#### **Goal 2: ARS will provide pre-employment transition and transition services as outlined in WIOA.**

##### Priorities

- ARS will expand and improve Pre-ETS.
- ARS will provide Pre-ETS and ensure students with employment and training goals are moved into Vocational Rehabilitation prior to the second semester of the senior year of high school.
- ARS will expand and improve Pre-ETS utilizing the resources at ACDC. The new model focuses resources to serve students with disabilities to prepare and guide them toward achieving competitive integrated employment.
- ARS will increase the number of Transition students that enter employment by having students work-ready upon graduation from high school or postsecondary training.

#### **Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities.**

##### Priorities:

- ARS will focus on public and private sector employers and increase business and industry awareness of ARS' services.

- ARS will develop and strengthen partnerships with business, workforce development partners, economic development agencies, and community organizations to meet the needs of existing and new business customers.
- ARS will increase services provided to public and private sector employers by leveraging Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs to assist employers in keeping the employees with disabilities on the job.

**Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.**

Priorities:

- ARS will determine effective methods to serve the underserved/unserved populations.
- ARS will strengthen relationships with WIOA partners and business and industry.
- ARS will improve service delivery to job seekers and businesses by consistently providing services that meet individual needs.
- Staff will receive comprehensive training to improve service delivery.
- ARS will ensure clients have access to assistive technology services by evaluating the need for assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process, and by making the proper referrals when assistive technology is appropriate.

**Goal 5: ARS will increase the utilization of Community Rehabilitation and Supported Employment providers to achieve employment outcomes.**

Priorities:

- ARS will increase the effectiveness of current and new external Employment/Supported Employment providers.
- ARS will expand the availability of community employment providers and partner services that meet the needs of Arkansans with disabilities, including those requiring supported employment.
- ARS transformed ACTI to a new service delivery model, ACDC. This model focuses as a hub for training and services to support VR consumers and/or students with disabilities to successfully reach the milestones of their individual plans for employment.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

Using data from the 2019 CSNA, ARS and the SRC developed the goals and priorities listed in Section L.2 above.

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

The performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA are addressed in Goal 1: ARS will meet performance requirements, under the priorities: ARS will monitor established performance accountability measures, and ARS will strengthen data verification procedures.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

Input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council contributed to the development of Goals and Priorities as outlined previously. ARS' existing strategic plan was also utilized.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES

ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection. However, in the event that available vocational rehabilitation funding cannot support the full range of services for all eligible individuals, the ARS Commissioner will initiate a structured process to move to an Order of Selection. This process will include public participation and comment, notification to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and input from the State Rehabilitation Council.

An Order of Selection requires that priority be given to individuals with the most significant disabilities in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. Therefore, after determining eligibility, ARS counselors will determine the client's priority for services based on the significance of the client's disability using the categories defined below.

Priority Category I – Most Significantly Disabled

An individual with a most significant disability is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment that seriously limits at least four functional capacity areas (mobility, communication, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome, and whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple services over an extended period of time.

Priority Category II – Significantly Disabled

An individual with a significant disability is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment that seriously limits three functional capacity areas (mobility, communication, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome and whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple services over an extended period of time.

Priority Category III – Non-Significantly Disabled

An individual with a non-significant disability is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one or two functional capacity areas (mobility, communication, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome and whose vocation rehabilitation is expected to require multiple services over an extended period of time.

If an Order of Selection becomes necessary, ARS anticipates that individuals who are receiving services under Individualized Plans for Employment at the time the Order is implemented will continue to receive services through closure of their cases.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

### C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

### D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

### E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

### 2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

If an Order of Selection becomes necessary, ARS anticipates serving all eligible individuals requiring specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

### N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

#### 1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

ARS addresses the provision of supported employment services in Goal 5: ARS will increase the utilization of Community Rehabilitation and Supported Employment providers to achieve employment outcomes.

Priority – ARS will increase the effectiveness of current and new external Employment/Supported Employment providers.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Target individuals with the most significant disabilities to provide customized employment, supported employment, and other individualized services.
- Collaborate with qualified vendors, community partners, and employers to expand supported employment initiatives.
- Continue to partner with other state agencies to provide collaborative services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Priority – ARS will expand the availability of community employment providers and partner services that meet the needs of Arkansans with disabilities, including those requiring supported employment.

Strategies - ARS will:

- Develop a community employment advisory committee.
- Develop partnership resources with other state agencies, provider associations and advocacy organizations to expand employment opportunities, transportation access, funding for extended services, and/or wrap around services for individuals not on Medicaid waiver.

2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND

ARS sets aside 50 percent of supportive employment funds specifically for youth programs that support competitive integrated employment.

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Determine methods for funding extended services for youth with disabilities not to exceed four years through the Employment First Vendors (CRPs, SE providers, and other external employment).
- Develop new service components or agreements with partners of state agencies for sequential funding of extended services to assure youth with disabilities have successful employment opportunities.
- Provide education and instruction of WIOA expectations to providers, and will establish Memorandums of Understanding or contract services to providers to initiate services to potentially eligible clients.

O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

ARS addresses the methods to be used to expand/improve services in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will determine effective methods to serve the underserved/unserved populations.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Work with WIOA partners to establish a common intake process that streamlines client application for services across partner programs.
- Collaborate with WIOA partners' field staff statewide to provide information and awareness about vocational rehabilitation services.
- Host partners' training conferences to provide education and resources available for potential clients.
- Partner with local Hispanic and Marshallese communities to increase awareness and availability of services.
- Collaborate with other partners to more effectively reach the deaf/hard of hearing community.
- Partner with the Centers for Independent Living to provide information about ARS services in the geographically underserved areas.

## 2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS

Field Services staff receives training to determine whether a client would benefit from the provision of assistive technology services and devices at each stage of the rehabilitation process. As appropriate, counselors refer clients to ARS' Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work) and Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs for assessment and consultation regarding the need for assistive technology as it relates to the achievement of their vocational goals. Counselors are also aware of services addressing the Arkansas Assistive Technology Act of 1998 offered by ICAN and the associated AFP.

ARS addresses the provision of assistive technology services for individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will ensure clients have access to assistive technology services by evaluating the need for assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process, and make the proper referrals when assistive technology is appropriate.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Make the assistive technology/AT@Work referral available in the CMS at the time of intake, plan development, placement, and post-employment checks.
- Train staff on the assistive technology services available to clients.
- Make application forms for various community service programs dealing with assistive technology available in the CMS.

ARS also addresses this provision in Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities.

Priority – ARS will increase services provided to public and private sector employers by leveraging Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs to assist employers in keeping employees with disabilities on the job.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Increase the overall number of SAW/RTW and Job Retention clients.
- Increase the number of employer referrals for SAW/RTW services.
- Incorporate SAW/RTW services when business engagement staff interacts with businesses.

## 3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM

ARS will address outreach procedures in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will determine effective methods to serve the underserved/unserved populations.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Partner with local Hispanic and Marshallese communities to increase awareness and availability of services.
- Collaborate with other partners to more effectively reach the deaf/hard of hearing community.
- Partner with the Centers for Independent Living to provide information about ARS services in the geographically underserved areas.

4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)

ARS addresses pre-employment transition services in Goal 2: ARS will provide pre-employment transition and transition services as outlined in WIOA.

Priority – ARS will expand and improve Pre-ETS.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Create internships in competitive integrated settings that could lead to on-the-job training and/or job placement.
- Identify industry recognized curriculums and train counselors to utilize it with students.
- Develop partnerships by contacting Special Education personnel in schools and by attending school board meetings.
- Create and implement marketing campaigns.
- Create standards and benchmarks evaluation criteria for each core service for vendors, schools, and counselors to use in identifying the knowledge/skills/abilities gained by students in the program.
- Increase awareness of viable work options in the areas where students live.
- Create a peer mentorship program including mentoring with CILS.
- Create a Professional Advisors Learning Series (PALS) where professionals in a field provide hands-on demonstrations to students on the work in that field, offer job shadowing opportunities, and informational interviews on the job duties.
- Promote and track employment outcomes directly from Pre-ETS services.

Priority – ARS will provide pre-employment transition services and ensure students with employment and training goals are moved into vocational rehabilitation prior to the second semester of the senior year of high school.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Spend at least 15% of VR grant on Pre-ETS.



- Direct students with disabilities into classes leading to certifications in Career and Technical Education and concurrent enrollment postsecondary training while in high school.
- Provide students in Pre-ETS with paid and unpaid work experiences.
- Provide students participating in Pre-ETS with career portfolios upon exiting high school.
- Provide Pre-ETS core services internally or by utilizing external contractors.
- Develop and implement a process for Pre-ETS students to become traditional VR services clients and monitor results.

Priority – ARS will increase the number of Transition students that enter employment by having students work ready upon graduation from high school or postsecondary training.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Develop and support apprenticeships for students prior to graduation.
- Increase credential attainments in high school by moving Pre-ETS-VR ready students to VR services prior to graduation.
- Develop and support on-the-job trainings/direct job placement and supported employment with businesses that have Pre-ETS internship sites.

#### 5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

ARS will transform ACTI from a residential program to a new service delivery model. ACDC's continual operation will be critical for ARS to meet needs of potentially eligible and eligible individuals with disabilities who live in the rural and other parts of the State. ACDC will provide skilled training and other coordination services for individuals with disabilities that lead to competitive integrated employment. The continual maintenance and improvement of ACDC will be necessary to maintain its operation in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible.

Priority – ARS will transform ACTI from a residential program to a new service delivery model, ACDC.

Strategies – Through ACDC, ARS will:

- Develop a new organizational structure consistent with meeting the demands of the new model, which will address:
  1. Career and Technical Education training programs to meet the needs of students and labor market demands.
  2. Pre-apprenticeship training programs to facilitate placement in USDOL approved registered apprenticeship programs.
  3. Registered apprenticeships.
  4. Pre-employment transition and career development services to assist students in transitioning to postsecondary education and employment.

5. Talent development for Pre-ETS and Transition customers.
6. Co-developing programming with Field Services to assist students in achieving career goals including identifying needed accommodations in postsecondary education and employment.
  - Obtain resources to support direct and facilitated provision of training and vocational rehabilitation services at the central location in Hot Springs and with partners across the state.
  - Develop a new plan for marketing and branding the new program model.

Priority – ARS will provide career counseling to 14(c) program participants to meet Section 511 requirements.

Strategy – Through ACDC, ARS will:

- Transition career counseling services from a contracted external provider to internal provision.

#### 6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

The Quality Assurance (QA) team ensures statewide consistency in state and federal vocational rehabilitation compliance issues by providing information to support the delivery of comprehensive services in order to prepare individuals with disabilities to enter and to remain in the workforce. The QA team monitors and reviews the field program for policy compliance by randomly selecting cases from specific categories for on-site review. Throughout the year, the QA team provides case management training during new counselor orientation training, and financial resources training.

ARS addresses performance accountability measures in Goal 1: ARS will meet performance accountability measures as outlined in WIOA.

Priority – ARS will monitor established performance accountability measures.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Utilize all available data to monitor performance outcomes.
- ARS Field staff will receive ongoing performance accountability measurement training.

Priority – ARS will strengthen data verification procedures.

Strategies – ARS will:

- (The QA team will) monitor and review randomly selected cases from specific categories for on-site review.
- Train personnel on acceptable data verification criteria and acceptable documentation.
- Collaborate with DSB to establish consistent documentation practices for data verification.

## 7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

ARS addresses assisting the workforce development system in Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities.

Priority – ARS will focus on public and private sector employers and increase business and industry awareness of ARS' services.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Continue to market to employers how ARS can be an effective resource as it relates to the hiring of individuals with disabilities and assisting them in remaining in the workforce.
- Maintain its partnership with Disability: IN - Arkansas, and assist in membership recruitment by leveraging partnerships with existing business customers.
- Work with employers to identify opportunities for pre-apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship, and On-the-Job programs.

Priority – ARS will develop and strengthen partnerships with business, workforce development partners, economic development agencies, and community organizations to meet the needs of existing and new business customers.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Utilize state agency transformation to expand relationships with partner agencies within the Department of Commerce.
- Continue to advance relationships with other WIOA partners at both the state and local levels.
- Conduct joint business service team meetings with all Workforce Development Boards.
- Develop products and services that meet individual business customer needs.
- Work with local workforce boards to identify local in demand occupations.
- Work with business and industry to establish on-the-job training, work-based learning opportunities, and apprenticeships.

ARS also addresses assisting the workforce development system in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will improve service delivery to job seekers and businesses by consistently providing services that meet individual needs.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Develop and implement a Job Club initiative and collaborate with counselors to support clients in honing soft skills to enhance job readiness.
- Assist counselors and clients in IPE development by providing local labor market information so clients are trained for employment with in-demand industries in order to create opportunities for sustainable employment.

- Work with counselors to develop a mechanism to determine when referral for job placement is appropriate.
- Develop career pathways with input from private industries and educational training providers in the state.

Priority – Staff will receive comprehensive training to improve service delivery.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Assist counselors and clients in IPE development by providing local labor market information and regional sector strategies.
- Train counselors to determine when referral for job placement is appropriate.
- Host statewide training to insure understanding of policy and procedures.
- Provide training on special populations to include those with serious mental illness and autism spectrum disorders.

Priority – ARS will strengthen relationships with WIOA partners and business and industry.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Conduct partner meetings with educational training providers on a quarterly basis to foster stronger relationships.
- Participate in business and industry Expo/Chamber events with other workforce partners.
- Participate in monthly “Core-Four” partner’s meetings with other WIOA partners.
- Seek opportunities for rehab area managers and counselors to collaborate with BEU staff through joint business customer visits to meet employer needs.
- Train field personnel on apprenticeships/pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training opportunities, and paid work experiences available for students and youth.
- (Rehab area managers will) access local workforce board funding and resources to utilize as a similar benefit in service delivery.

Priority – ARS will improve service delivery to Arkansas businesses by consistently providing services that meet the employers’ needs.

Strategies – Business Engagement will:

- Utilize Salesforce CRM as licenses are issued to share information with partner agencies to more effectively serve business customers.
- Implement a customer satisfaction survey to measure the effectiveness of services offered to business customers.

## 8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

### A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

ARS and the SRC jointly developed the goals, priorities, and strategies based on input provided by the most recent CSNA and input from key stakeholders. ARS has developed a strategic plan that supports the goals, priorities, and strategies. The strategies are intended to position ARS to successfully meet WIOA performance requirements, to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided to agency clients including those who are unserved or underserved, and to create opportunities to enhance relationships with employers, community organizations, and WIOA partners.

#### B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

As required, ARS will reserve and use a portion of its funds for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. The provision of transition/pre-employment transition services is anticipated to be a targeted area. Establishing more effective and efficient ways to serve the unserved and underserved, another. ARS will continue to utilize innovation and expansion funds to support the State Rehabilitation Council as well as the State Independent Living Council.

#### C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

ARS recognizes that providing Arkansans with disabilities equitable access and the opportunity to fully participate in its programs and services is and has been an ongoing issue as evidenced by results from the most recent CSNA where the unserved/underserved populations of Hispanics and the deaf/hard of hearing were specifically mentioned. In addition, ARS recognizes, geographically, a significant part of the state is rural and the availability of services is limited including supported employment. ARS believes the following goals will address this issue: Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities; Goal 4: ARS will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery; and Goal 5: ARS will increase the utilization of community rehabilitation and supported employment providers to achieve employment outcomes. The intent is to provide more opportunities for these populations to participate in services provided or sponsored by ARS.

#### P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

##### 1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

##### A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

**Goal 1:** To establish baselines and meet benchmarks for state with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

- ARS will increase referrals, enhance job development and placement services, and recruit qualified rehabilitation counselors to fill vacancies to meet or exceed past performance in employment outcomes.
- ARS will increase performance in Supported Employment for youth and adults with disabilities with emphasis on serving an increased number of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including developmental/intellectual, behavioral health concerns and cognitive disabilities.

- ARS will provide training to improve outreach activities to unserved and underserved minority populations in order to improve performance.

**Goal 1: Evaluation and Progress**

For PY2018 as reported on the ETA-9169, ARS had a second quarter employment rate of 56.3%. Median earning were \$5,240.93, and measurable skill gains were at a rate of 25.2%.

ARS:

- Increased referrals from 4,863 in PY2017 to 5,258 in PY2018, which is an 8.12 % increase. Counselor vacancies decreased from 17% to 4.5%.
- Field program set aside 50% of supportive employment dollars to engage youth and provide vocational services. Youth services increased by 3% and adult services by 5%.
- Hosted ten trainings to improve consumer awareness about ARS services. Other topics covered during the trainings included transportation, employment opportunities, and job development preparation.

**Goal 2:** Increase the availability of Supported Employment (SE) services to youth and adults with significant disabilities.

- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) team, is receiving technical assistance from the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy subject matter experts on methods to use Medicaid Waivers and other partners' funds in restructuring to expand and improve SE services. The team includes: The Department of Human Services Divisions of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), Behavioral Health Services (DBHS), Services for the Blind (DSB), Medical Services (DMS), Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), Department of Workforce Services (DWS), and the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE SEU).
- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, will initiate revised MOUs based on the WIOA, including new rates and reimbursement methodology for braiding services.
- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, will provide technical assistance to the pilot projects focused on transitioning from facility-based services to community-based services.

**Goal 2: Evaluation and Progress**

ARS:

- Met with the EFSLMP team to focus on implementing streamlined supported employment services, to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), to continue provider transformation, and to transition facility-based services (subminimum wage) to community-based services through funds provided by a 2018 Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Programs (DOL ODEP) grant.
- With the Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Service (DDS) piloted and implemented sequential funding of supported employment services utilizing streamlined services, provider requirements, and outcome payments to secure competitive integrated employment for individuals with significant disabilities.

- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding along with the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind, the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit and the Arkansas Department of Human Services' divisions of Aging and Adult Services, Developmental Disabilities Services, Behavioral Health Services, and Medical Services. The MOU provides guidelines for the necessary coordination between state agencies to ensure competitive integrated employment is the preferred option for individuals with disabilities, including individuals with significant disabilities, who are eligible for more than one publicly funded program administered by the parties to this MOU.
- In partnership with DHS – DDS, through the DOL ODEP grant, initiated strategies for Arkansas to implement the State Agency Model Employer (SAME.) DHS – DDS piloted the project, and nine individuals with the most significant disabilities became state employees through extra help positions. These individuals are working for DHS, ARS, and the Department of Finance and Administration.

**Goal 3: Improve public relations, marketing, information, outreach, and referrals.**

- ARS will continue the marketing plan to increase awareness of VR services to citizens, service providers, and business and industry, and to increase employment outcomes to improve performance accountability measures.
- Access and Accommodations in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN, State AT Program) will provide a new informational website to provide resources for accommodation and assistive technology as it relates to home, education, and employment.
- ARS will develop outreach strategies designed to improve access to VR services for the state's Hispanic residents with disabilities. Field personnel will distribute materials and information in a variety of formats designed to reach and serve the growing diverse population in Arkansas.
- ARS will develop educational and informational materials designed to inform potential referral sources about the referral process and the scope of ARS.
- ARS will utilize its network of Community Rehabilitation Programs to identify individuals with disabilities who are minorities and/or have the most significant disability. These individuals, who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language, can be referred to ARS and other support service networks needed to reach employment.

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**Goal 3: Evaluation and Progress**

**ARS:**

- Improved service provision within the Hispanic population by providing informational resources and pamphlets in Spanish, and by providing Spanish translators and interpreters for Spanish speaking clients.
- Launched a new website for the State AT Program, ICAN, to provide Arkansans in need of assistive technology and accommodation solutions better access to information, training, technical assistance, and devices to assist them in remaining independent in the home, with education, and with employment. For this reporting period 7,252

individual users accessed the website viewing 22,061 different pages, and performing 4,059 searches within the website.

- Updated marketing materials, and provided education and outreach for ACDC through Twitter posts and ACDC success stories in agency publications. Communications also updated the ACDC webpage on the agency website, and forwarded public comments and questions from the website comment link to ACDC staff for review. ACDC Staff members provided education and outreach to high schools across the state, attended job fairs, and communicated with internal and external partners.
- Found it not feasible at this time to collect data on CRPs who identify individuals who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language might benefit from ARS services and other support services.

**Goal 4:** Increase collaboration with business that leads to increased employment outcomes.

- ACDC will work to expand the success of registered apprenticeships, internships, and part-time employment opportunities for ARS clients.
- ARS has developed the statewide business and industry advisory board and implemented the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP). ARS will expand and grow TAP to increase job potential for agency customers.
- ARS will increase the number of business relations representatives to provide job placement services in all Field Services offices and ACDC.
- A statewide advisory group will be established and composed of individuals from business and industry, counselors, job placement specialists, and other appropriate professionals to explore participating in the National Employment Team.
- ARS will actively support the development of the Arkansas Business Leadership Network. ARS will continue to meet with companies from across the state throughout the year to garner support and identify an anchor employer(s) to facilitate the application process.
- The local business advisory group at ACDC will be integrated into the statewide ARS business advisory group with the goal of expanding job placement and employment outcomes.
- ARS will enhance relationships with businesses whose corporate offices are headquartered in Arkansas and partner with senior corporate officers and managers. Through a dedicated full-time corporate business relations consultant, ARS will be positioned to build relationships with key decision makers as well as connect with the State Chamber of Commerce to solidify its status as an economic contributor and not just a social service provider.
- ARS will actively market ARS' Business Relations services to companies seeking qualified applicants with disabilities.
- ARS will develop and initiate activities and events to recognize individuals who have overcome their disabilities, and give recognition to employers and businesses, who have demonstrated "best practices," hired people with disabilities, and made unique and cost-effective reasonable accommodations.



- ARS will develop a presentation to advocate the benefits of hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities.
- ARS will update promotional/educational videos, brochures, mailers, etc., and target businesses.
- District managers will partner with business relations representatives to effectively market ARS services to business and industry, performing an intentional and active role on the business relations team.
- ARS will evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of current marketing strategies and how ARS is currently engaging employers.
- Through the Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work program, the Access and Accommodations team will continue to be a resource for employers and employees for expertise in seeking information on providing accommodation and comprehensive assistive technology evaluations.

**Goal 4: Evaluation and Progress**

- Expanded apprenticeships, internships, and part-time employment opportunities, engaged in pre-apprenticeship activities with business members of the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, and expanded the registered apprenticeship program to include people with disabilities and added new occupations such as Certified Nursing Assistants, Medical Administrative Assistants, and Information Technology Generalist. There were challenges to provide these opportunities across the state and VR consumer participation was less than optimal.
- Continued its efforts to integrate the ACDC local business advisory group into the statewide ARS business advisory group to expand job placement and employment outcomes.

**ARS:**

- Partnered with Arkansas Support Network and WIOA Partners (Division of Services for the Blind and Adult Education) to host ten career fairs across the state.
- Supported the growth of Disability: IN – Arkansas with core partners (JB Hunt, Tyson, TJX, Walmart, and Regions Bank).

**The Business Engagement Unit:**

- Revamped print and digital marketing materials to reflect the needs and perspective of employers, changing the emphasis from supply to demand.
- Developed a presentation geared to employers, which presents a business case for creating an inclusive workforce, and covers return on investment, human capital, market, diversity, innovation, and ARS services.
- In partnership with CSAVR, developed a promotional PSA video outlining the no cost services ARS can provide employers. The video can be accessed on the ARS website.
- Facilitated the Fourth Annual Arkansas Business Employment Summit in 2018, which focused on empowering all through inclusion. During the Summit, companies

demonstrating best practices in hiring people with disabilities were recognized through various awards including the Distinguished Partnership Award, the Business Partnership Award of the Year, the Leadership Award, and the Community Partnership Award.

- Received technical assistance from the Job Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JDVRTAC) to strengthen relationships with ARS field offices, which resulted in counselors, rehab area managers, and senior management accompanying Business Engagement representatives on scheduled business visits. This collaboration encouraged a shared understanding of the “bigger picture” of job-driven vocational rehabilitation, which led to a shift in the collective thinking on the alignment of client skill attainment with skills actually needed in the job market.
- Assisted counselors in obtaining the latest labor market information to assist the client in developing an effective IPE.
- Presented with Field personnel information to employers about job training experiences, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities for transitional students. For example, The Fort Smith Business Engagement team met with Answer Fort Smith to design an accommodations training program.
- Is exploring the redesign of its customer satisfaction survey. Currently, employers receive a short email after services are provided to gauge satisfaction and to gain information on how to improve services to business.

#### Access and Accommodations:

- Provided accommodation and assistive technology solutions in the workplace through the Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) program for 72 individual cases from 44 different employers across Arkansas, with 13 of these employers returning multiple employees for services through the program.

#### **Goal 5:** Expand and improve transition services program.

- ARS has been actively engaged in the development of legislation to implement comprehensive transition and postsecondary education programs in institutions of higher education, and will continue to act as a resource in the development and implementation of postsecondary education programs. ARS will also provide information to clients about these programs.
- ARS will conduct an assessment of transitional services statewide and implement policy and procedures consistent with WIOA.
- ARS will explore combining both transition programs and establish one vision for transition services.
- ARS will develop a transition committee to initiate a statewide plan to provide innovative transition services to students.
- ARS will provide pre-employment transition services such as job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences including internships that provide integrated environments.
- ARS will provide counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs.

- ARS will provide workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living.
- ARS will provide instruction in self-advocacy and peer mentoring.
- ARS district managers will work with WIOA partners, school districts, and educational co-ops to enhance working relations to effectively provide transitional services.
- ARS will explore hiring a Transitional Coordinator who will implement strategies of enhancing transitional services and providing statewide training to counselors.
- ARS will work with business and industry to establish on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and paid work experiences to prepare students for the workforce.
- ARS will collaborate with WIOA partners and other state agencies to utilize braided funding for services.
- ARS leadership will work with the State Department of Education to strengthen relationships between schools and rehabilitation district managers and counselors.
- ARS leadership will work with school districts throughout the state to facilitate and enhance the working relationships between the local high schools and local rehabilitation district managers and counselors.
- ARS will continue to host Transition Expos across the state to market ARS transition services. ARS will continue to partner with Arkansas Transition Services (ATS) to provide technical assistance with transition planning, and will support the bi-annual state Transition Summit for local transition teams and cadre meetings throughout the school year in an effort to identify local resources and continue to increase awareness of ARS services. ARS will continue to refer clients to College Bound Arkansas to prepare transition students living with a disability for college, will continue to sponsor Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), and will support the annual Disability Awareness activities. ARS will initiate and implement specialty camps available to all students with disabilities designed to focus on pre-employment transition core services.
- ARS counselors will continue to coordinate with special education teachers to identify students with individual education plans to implement transition services prior to the senior year.
- If a student is determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, a plan for employment will be completed prior to graduation.
- The ARS Field Program and the will continue to expand opportunities for young people with disabilities to participate in the four-week, jointly developed Transition Employment Program (TEP) in which students receive a comprehensive assessment/evaluation, OSHA certification training, job readiness and soft-skill development, and three internship rotations at ACDC.
- ARS will continue to partner with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), and ACCESS Group, Inc. to increase the number of young adults served in the UAMS Project SEARCH® site. In addition, ARS will look for opportunities to increase the number of Project SEARCH® sites by partnering with other community partners. ARS will continue to support the youth model site in Fayetteville in partnership with Lifestyles, Inc., Fayetteville Public Schools, and Washington Regional Medical Center.

- Access and Accommodations will work with counselors, educators, and employers to assist students with disabilities who utilize assistive technology by providing assessments, consultation, and acquisition as part of the transition process from secondary education to postsecondary education and work.
- Access and Accommodations (AT@Work) in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Program (ICAN, State AT Program) and community partners will provide training to appropriate staff as it relates to the legal provisions of assistive technology as an accommodation in education and employment settings.

#### **Goal 5: Evaluation and Progress**

##### **ARS:**

- Assisted the University of Arkansas' Empower Program with the policy and procedural elements of Pre-ETS and traditional Transition services that support the program.
- Developed procedural guidance for counselors, vendors, and schools participating in Pre-ETS, and promulgated policy that supports both the traditional Transition and the Pre-ETS programs. ARS utilizes a model of a continuum of services for Pre-ETS and Transition services, in which the Pre-ETS program is the first step to exploring careers, positive work attitudes and behaviors by using curriculums and activities that instruct on all five Pre-ETS core services. Prior to graduation, students are introduced to their transition counselors, who work with them using the existing documentation from Pre-ETS to develop plans for employment prior to the student's high school graduation.
- Developed a transition committee that provided input and suggestions to the various models of Pre-ETS currently in place: 1) school-based model, 2) vendor services model, 3) counselor driven direct services model, and 4) camps and forums. Work-based learning/work experiences are conducted in the most integrated setting available. Additionally, 33 schools have performance-based contracts with ARS to provide work-based learning and work readiness training to students in high school.
- Reviewed the curriculum and activities of over 25 vendors and approved 20 vendors that provide direct instruction on counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs. In addition, Pre-ETS counselors received curriculum and instructional activities in this core area that meet the scope of service for counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs.
- Provided self-advocacy training utilizing established curriculum, and provided peer mentoring in group settings by vendors and schools, which is monitored by Pre-ETS counselors.
- Rehab area managers attended WIOA Board meetings, CIRCLES trainings with school districts, and educational co-op trainings.
- Made available paid work experiences to 3,750 students in 150 high schools, which are available after school and on the weekends through 20 vendors statewide.
- Collaborated with school districts to share in the delivery and cost of services. With vendor programs in the school system, schools provide transition services outlined in agreements as the responsibility of the school and carried out by school funding, while vendors provide the Pre-ETS core services not provided by the school. School teachers

monitor and oversee the delivery of Pre-ETS core services in their classrooms. With the OWL contracts, schools fund and provide career exploration, self-advocacy, and counseling on postsecondary education, as well as some soft skills training prior to a work experience. ARS funds the work experience and work readiness skills that are taught and reinforced on the job.

- Signed a statewide Memorandum of Agreement outlining the duties and responsibilities of all agencies working in Pre-ETS and Transition. It emphasizes collaboration between ARS, Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind, the Department of Education – Special Education Unit, and the local school districts.
- Developed individualized MOUs with school districts regarding the implementation of Pre-ETS within the district.
- Conducted Transition Expos across the State, and assisted in the planning and training of the Arkansas Transition Services bi-annual State Transition Summit.
- Referred students to College Bound Arkansas. Developed, implemented, and executed the Youth Leadership Forum, and participated in Disability Awareness activities offered by the Statewide Independent Living Council.
- Implemented a Film Camp offered by Joey Travolta’s Inclusion Films.
- Ensured all students found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services have plans for employment prior to graduation. Part of the continuum of services in transition is to identify and refer Pre-ETS students to Transition counselors in their senior year so individual plans for employment can be written and implemented for students as they exit high school.
- Provided, through the ARS Transition Program and ACTI, the four-week Transition Employment Program (TEP), where students received a comprehensive assessment/evaluation, OSHA certification training, job readiness and soft-skills development, self-advocacy instruction, and work-based learning experiences including three internship rotations at ACTI. TEP crossed program years; therefore, participants cannot be calculated strictly by program year. In 2018, TEP was held June 24 – July 20, and had 114 participants with 103 completers (90% completion). In 2019, TEP was held June 23 – July 19, and there were 74 participants with 70 completers (95% completion).
- Partnered with ten Arkansas businesses to host the Project SEARCH® program to provide on-the-job training consisting of three ten-week internship rotations for all participants. Currently, ARS partners with the ACCESS Group, Inc. to provide Project SEARCH® sites at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, CHI St. Vincent (Hot Springs and the Hot Springs Lakeside and Fountain Lake School Districts), Ouachita County Medical Center, St. Bernard’s Regional Medical Center, Mercy Hospital (Fort Smith), University of Arkansas – Pine Bluff, and the Bentonville School District at Embassy Suites in Rogers. ARS supports the Washington Regional Medical Center Project SEARCH® site in partnership with Lifestyles, Inc. and the Fayetteville and Springdale School Districts, and with Friendship Community Care, Inc. at the Saint Mary’s Regional Medical Center site. There are 115 Arkansas businesses that serve on the Project SEARCH® Business Advisory Council.
- Provided 59 individual trainings through Access and Accommodation staff including ICAN, which included individuals with disabilities, family members or guardians of

individuals with disabilities, education representatives, employers, allied health facilities representatives, community living representatives, technology field representatives, and ARS field and managerial staff. Training included the provision and implementation of individual pieces of technology or accommodations and the “dos and don’ts” of providing accommodations in an employment setting.

**Goal 6:** Develop and improve Community Rehabilitation Programs.

- ARS will continue assigning a rehabilitation counselor as a liaison to each CRP in each District.
- ARS district managers will assume a more active role with CRPs to develop more positive working relationships.
- ARS will train CRPs on the WIOA requirements for services to youth and students with disabilities as it relates to Section 511 – Limitations on Sub-Minimum Wage.
- ARS will initiate purchased service agreements focused on moving CRPs from fee for service to performance-based outcome payments.
- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, the Arkansas SRC and the RSA State Liaison, will establish technical assistance guidelines focused on CRPs transitioning from facility-based services to community-based services.
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- ARS will, in consultation with RSA, develop short-term and long-range maintenance plans for ACDC, a state owned and operated CRP.
- ACDC will continue to utilize the Professional Career Performance Program designed to reinforce positive behaviors essential to attaining and maintaining employment.
- ARS will expand the OSHA ten-hour training as a weeklong stand-alone program.
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- A Heavy Equipment Operation program will include a collaborative training agreement with a local two-year college to provide CDL training and licensing as well as a six-week hands-on training on hydraulic excavator simulator.
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**Goal 6:** Evaluation and Progress

ARS:

- Hosted Lunch and Learns to increase quality of relationships with CRPs.
- Provided training on Pre-ETS and job placement, which enabled CRP partners to provide new job placement services, and new Pre-ETS services such as job exploration, postsecondary guidance, and work-based learning in the schools.
- Added 15 new CRP vendors. ARS assigns a rehabilitation counselor as a liaison to each CRP, and liaisons complete a monthly report to help monitor CRP needs.

- Trained approximately 50 CRPs and 14(c) Certificate holders (65 participants) on WIOA requirements, and ensured the 3,500 employees at 14(c) Organizations received career counseling, information about competitive integrated employment, and referrals as deemed appropriate.
- Initiated new purchased service agreements for community-based services with outcome reimbursement payments.
- Encouraged and provided information to CRPs interested in transformation on how to apply for technical assistance from the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (DOL ODEP) Provider Transformation Program. CRPs also received information on how to utilize the ODEP “Provider Transformation Pilot Version” manual released May 2017.
- ARS, in partnership with DHS – DDS, offered Transformation and Pre-ETS training offered by subject matter experts (SME) to CRPs. Thirty CRPs were trained. In addition, Employment First Strategic Planning was initiated through a SME as part of the DOL ODEP grant.
- Based on results from the annual ACTI monitoring, concluded ACTI should move from a residential services program to a community-based program known as the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC). Short- and long-term maintenance needs indicated the residential model was not cost effective to continue. Initial plan development for the new model is underway.
- Saw a reduction in discharges as a result of utilizing the Professional Career Performance Program, which is designed to reinforce positive behaviors.
- Expanded the OSHA 10 stand-alone program and approximately 200 students have completed the two-day program.
- Discontinued Call Center Training for lack of interest.
- Observed limited interest in CDL training and hands-on hydraulic excavator training.

**Goal 7: Improve training, resources, and continuing education.**

- ARS will review the needs identified in the Training Needs Assessment conducted by ARS Staff Development and Training to identify significant training and continuing education activities.
- Staff Development and Training will coordinate and conduct task force meetings representing a cross section of agency personnel to analyze the identified needs submitted. Information from the task force will be incorporated, if appropriate, into the proposed Career Development Enhancement Program and the employees’ training and education plans. Training delivery method will vary depending on the subject matter and all resources available will be considered.
- ARS will train staff to increase awareness related to Employment First (E1st) provider transformation and integrated community-based services as it relates to Community Rehabilitation Programs, Supported Employment Programs, and External Job Placement vendors.
- ARS/ACDC will undertake a feasibility study and memoranda of agreement with Higher Education providers to further the agency’s desire to provide continuing education and

training for VR clients wishing to pursue higher accreditation in skilled trades and to enhance employment outcomes.

- Access and Accommodations (AT@Work) in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Program (ICAN, State AT Program) and community partners will provide training to appropriate staff as it relates to the legal provisions of assistive technology in education and employment settings.

**Goal 7: Evaluation and Progress**

**ARS:**

- Trained staff on the external employment vendor services with the addition of the 2018 implementation of the ARS/DDS service partnership and on how to complete case management.
- Provided information from Field Services management to Staff Development and Training about staff training needs on a monthly basis. Staff Development and Training monitored the effectiveness of the trainings offered and reviewed all training needs with the Employee Engagement Team, a cross section of staff. After discussion with the Employee Engagement Team, the Career Development Enhancement Program was modified.
- Increased online training during 2018.

**ACTI:**

- Prior to conversion to ACDC, partnered with National Park College to arrange an articulation agreement for the Certified Production Technology class.
- Prior to conversion to ACDC, assisted ACTI students pursuing higher education in obtaining credit for the training completed.

**Access and Accommodations/ICAN:**

- Partnered with the University of Arkansas' Partners for Inclusive Communities to provide statewide trainings focusing on accessibility of facilities, documentation, and digital media. Those attending included individuals with disabilities, education settings representatives, allied health program representatives, and ARS field and managerial staff.

**Goal 8: Improve ARS' ability to act as a resource when assisting individuals with disabilities and employers in addressing accommodation needs.**

- ARS will reorganize/realign its Special Programs section to better communicate the availability of resources to assist in the accommodation process. As part of this change Special Programs will be renamed Access and Accommodations.
- ARS will rename its Retaining a Valued Employee (RaVE) program to Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW). This language is consistent with programs/practices in private/public sector employment and communicates functional intent.
- As part of the Governor's Employment First Task Force, ARS will assume a lead role in the implementation of a SAW/RTW program within Arkansas state government.



- ARS will work with WIOA partners at both the state and local level to support SAW/RTW efforts in both public and private sector employment.
- ARS will sufficiently staff its Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work) program to meet referral demands from the ARS Field Program and SAW/RTW initiative. Staff will have expertise to address accommodation needs in training and employment settings.

**Goal 8: Evaluation and Progress**

Access and Accommodations:

- Created the Community Service Program Director position, under Access and Accommodations, which reports to the Associate Commissioner of Access and Accommodations. This position oversees five Community Service Programs, provides guidance and direction, and enables more diligent administration of those programs.
- Renamed the Retaining a Valued Employee (RaVE) program to Stay at Work/Return to Work (SAW/TRW) to better reflect programs/practices in the private/public sector employment and to better communicate functional intent.
- Made presentations and conducted training about SAW/RTW efforts at WIOA partners meeting, State Agency Model Employer (SAME) trainings, and regional Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) trainings.
- Sufficiently staffed AT@ Work by filling one Occupational Therapist position and by transferring one Physical Therapist position formerly located at ACTI to AT@Work.

**Goal 9: Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery for agency clients.**

- ARS will ensure the development and implementation of comprehensive training for rehab area managers and counselors to effectively serve clients.
- ARS will adequately staff the field program to reduce caseloads and allow counselors to devote additional time to direct consumer contact and provision of services.
- ARS will examine the agency referral sources and ensure counselors are trained to provide effective services to clients with mental health concerns and intellectual/developmental disabilities.
- ARS will increase the role of the rehab area manager in the areas of outreach and marketing at local levels statewide to cultivate positive working relationships with employers, partners, and stakeholders.
- ARS will implement training that will focus on increasing the number of individuals exiting the system with quality employment outcomes.
- ARS will evaluate the Supported Employment services provided statewide and focus on expansion in rural areas.
- ARS will strengthen the relationships with WIOA partners such as Workforce Services, Services for the Blind, Adult Education, and Department of Human Services to better serve agency customers with resources.
- ARS will implement and develop policies for WIOA and provide statewide training for the field program.

- ACDC will evaluate programs on effectiveness and implement new talent development programs that give student's competitive training for the 2020 workforce.
- ACDC will implement efficient communication processes with the field program to ensure counselors are aware of ACDC programs.
- ACDC will improve marketing and outreach to employers, schools, and prospective clients.

#### **Goal 9: Evaluation and Progress**

##### **ARS:**

- Compiled data on services provided during the FFY2018 to establish baselines for annual service evaluation.
- Trained field staff utilizing the Quality Assurance Department, rehab area managers, Office of Personnel Management, and Staff Development and Training, which reduced data entry error ratios and audit findings.
- Provided training for rehab area managers on the Hidden Rules of Social Class offered by University of Arkansas CURRENTS.
- Reduced the counselor vacancy rate from 17% to 4.5 %, which lowered the caseloads statewide by 5%. The national caseload average is 156 and ARS is at 160 cases per counselor. ARS field programs established specialty counselors for Pre-ETS and deaf and hard of hearing to reduce caseloads.
- Partnered with DDS to provided E1st services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. ARS partnered with the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville to provide career counseling to all sub-minimum wage 14(c) providers serving over 6,000 clients.
- Collaborated with WIOA partners. For example, the Chief of Field Services sits on the WIOA Executive Board and rehab area managers sit on local WIOA Boards, participate in Partner Meetings, and provide informational presentations on vocational rehabilitation services to local WIOA partners. The WIOA Executive Board hosted two statewide trainings to provide education and referral alignment throughout the state. ARS is working on a unified referral process.
- Collaborated with DHS to provide individuals with developmental disabilities work opportunities through the State Agency Model Employer program.
- Updated the agency's policy to include the WIOA changes, with an effective date of January 1, 2019. Rehab area managers trained staff on the policy updates and reviewed and monitored policies and procedures at monthly staff meetings.

##### **ACTI:**

- Prior to conversion to ACDC, converted its paper case management system to an electronic system in June 2018. This change improved communication between ACTI counselors and field counselors. In addition, communication protocols are in place that support and enhance the shared roles of case management.
- Prior to conversion to ACDC, participated in community outreach activities throughout the state with the goals of increasing referrals and of raising community awareness of

ACTI services. In total, ACTI staff participated in 654 activities through presentations, exhibit booths, conference attendance, and other activities that targeted field staff, the general community, potential employers, high school teachers, and parents.

- Prior to conversion to ACDC, continued to offer talent development programs at ACTI. In PY2017, ACTI served 649 clients through 15 programs. In PY2018, 874 clients were served through 15 programs.

#### **Outreach: Strategy**

ARS provides outreach activities to individuals from minority backgrounds, individuals with the most significant disabilities, and others who are unserved or underserved. For PY 2018, ARS' focus was to provide training to improve outreach activities, and to utilize its network of CRPs to identify individuals with disabilities who are minorities and/or have the most significant disability. These individuals, who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language, can be referred to ARS and other support service networks needed to reach employment.

#### **Outreach: Evaluation and Progress**

ARS:

- Developed a multi-pronged program for serving the state's Hispanic community.
- Implemented training for counselors and professional assessment staff to learn the cultural values of the state's Hispanic community and ways to break down cultural and language barriers to accessing VR services.
- Worked with the state's Hispanic transition clients to encourage them to consider VR counseling as a career.
- Developed a statewide strategy with the state's graduate VR programs to recruit more Hispanic/Spanish speaking students who would subsequently be recruited by ARS.
- Established an itinerary point to better serve the Marshallese community, and to disseminate pamphlets and vocational information.
- Located new itinerary points across the state to better serve the underserved and unserved.
- Explored ways to partner with the Centers for Independent Living to provide awareness about ARS' services for individuals with disabilities.
- Increased efforts to work with WIOA partners to more effectively provide services to individuals with disabilities throughout the state.

#### **B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

There were two factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities: (1) mandated funding for Pre-ETS, and (2) ACTI maintenance, both of which reduced the funding available for general VR services. While an Order of Selection is not currently justified, ARS is exploring options for implementing an Order if and when one becomes necessary. Also, ARS is in the process of transforming ACTI from a residential model to a community-based model, ACDC.

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

ARS increased the availability of supported employment services to clients by providing training and technical assistance to vendors and vocational rehabilitation counselors. ARS placed a greater emphasis on proven and innovative supported employment outcomes related to competitive integrated employment performance-based outcomes. ARS created a new monitoring process to track the number of vendors in each area, number of clients served by each vendor, milestone payments made, and expenditures. Successful closure data is shared with CRPs.

**Supported Employment: Evaluation and Progress**

During PY2018, SE referrals remained at the PY2017 level at 286. The SE successful employment outcomes increased from 116 to 117, which is a one percent increase. However, based on all 26 closures, SE successful employment outcomes continued at five percent.

ARS:

- Ensured the quality of SE services by monitoring data related to expenditures, through ongoing communication with the counselors, and by monitoring CRPs, who received specific funding amounts, through vendor case review.
- Hosted two trainings provided by DOL ODEP Subject Matter Experts that targeted state leadership and focused on supported employment for individuals with significant behavioral health concerns. Additionally, ARS hosted a stakeholders meeting where 40 participants discussed supported employment services/individual placement and supports, and what it means to be an Employment First state.
- Partnered, by utilizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with Division of Workforce Services, Division of Services for the Blind, Arkansas Department of Education – Special Education Unit, and the Department of Human Services: Division of Developmental Disabilities Services and Division of Adult, Aging, and Behavioral Health Services. The MOU defines the partnership, the roles and responsibilities between the agencies, and successful employment as competitive integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Collaborated with AR APSE to host the organization's biennial conference, which focused on best models of service provision for supported employment, customized employment, and provider transformation.
- Hosted free online job coach certification training with a total of 284 participants certified, and provided training on supported employment to 676 participants.
- ARS provided transition from employment to extended services beginning when individuals reach a point of stabilization on the job and for the next 90 days towards successful closure. After ARS closes the cases as successful, extended services is transitioned to the provider responsible for funding. If the individual is on waiver, originally funding has been through the Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services Waiver Program. In PY2018, this funding transferred to the Provider-led Shared Savings Entity (PASSE), a model of organized

care created by Act 775 of 2017. Each PASSE is made up of governing providers who have entered into a partnership with an experienced program administration organization. If the individual is not on waiver, providers must generate funding to provide extended services.

#### B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

There were two factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities: (1) mandated funding for Pre-ETS, and (2) ACTI maintenance, both of which reduced the funding available for general VR services. While an Order of Selection is not currently justified, ARS is exploring options for implementing an Order if and when one becomes necessary. Also, ARS is in the process of transforming ACTI from a residential model to a community-based model, ACDC.

#### 3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

In PY2018, the measurable skill gains rate as reported on the ETA-9169 was 25.2%. ARS is monitoring performance on other section 116 indicators, and rates for expected levels of performance will be reported in the two-year update.

#### 4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

During PY2018, ARS utilized I&E funds to support activities of the State Rehabilitation Council. Monies were also utilized to fund a large portion of the State Independent Living Council's (SILC) budget as outlined in the SILC's resource plan. Funds were used to support outreach activities to unserved and underserved Arkansans with disabilities and to strengthen relationships with our business partners.

#### Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

##### 1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

###### **Quality**

ARS refers individuals for Supported Employment services to one of 63 certified CRPs. Supported Employment services are provided to individuals with a most significant disability, including youth with a most significant disability. The services are individualized and customized, consistent with the unique preferences, interests, needs, supports (PINS), and informed choice by the individual. Supported Employment processes assist job seekers with job development, job placement, stabilization on the job, 90 days to successful employment and extended services funded by other entities or by ARS for a youth under 25. Supported Employment is a "place then train" model.

###### **Scope of Services**

ARS determines eligibility for SE services and CRPs bill based on meeting the Milestone requirements.

**Milestone 1 – Referral/Job Development:** CRPs accept the referral and provide assistance with career readiness activities (seeking employment, filling out applications, and interviewing

skills, etc.) and assistance in the development, creation, or identification of paid integrated work in a community business or self-employment setting.

**Milestone 2 – Job Placement:** CRPs assist an individual in obtaining a job in a competitive integrated setting based on his/her interests, abilities, needs, and informed choice. The individual is placed in a competitive integrated employment setting with supports for a period of time, and is compensated commensurate with others in the same position at minimum wage or above.

**Milestone 3 – Stabilization:** This service time frame assures an individual has learned his/her job with supports to meet the demands of the integrated work environment in assurance of long-term job success. The individual works successfully for the minimum required 15 hours a week identified in the IPE. The individual must remain on the job 30 days or more to be considered stable, and the Job Coach reduces support to less than 20 percent of the individual's working hours. Extended services begin in stabilization with the identification of the funding source or by ARS, if a youth is under the age of 25. Youth receiving extended services funded by ARS will remain in this status until the service is no longer needed and the youth is considered successfully employed or until four years of this service expires or the youth reaches the age of 25.

## 2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

ARS provides time-limited services needed to support an individual in employment. Vocational Rehabilitation can fund a maximum of 24 months of job coaching and follow-along services unless the IPE indicates more than 24 months of services are necessary for the individual to achieve job stability before transitioning to extended services. Prior to the purchase of supported employment services, the counselor determines the need for services, the appropriate funding stream for extended services, and the selected CRP through informed choice and identified on the IPE. The transition to the extended services (long-term funding source) occurs after the individual is employed at the goal of 15 hours established in ARS policy and begins to stabilize on the job. After the determination of funding for extended services, the individual must maintain employment for at least 90 days before the individual's case is a successful closure and before he/she is transitioned to extended services. This transition would be completed within a 24-month time frame of supported employment services, including job coaching. If a determination is made based that the individual needs more than 24 months of services to achieve job stability and the time-limited services of job coaching, ARS will obtain justification from the CRP.

ARS developed the Youth Extended Services policy for individuals under the age of 25. This policy allows ARS to pay for youth extended services if no other resources are available up to four years or age 25. Youth Extended Services may be available through Individualized Job Coaching Services on an as needed basis after job placement. Youth Extended Services is available for up to 200 hours per year not to exceed four years during the execution of the IPE. The service supports youth to ensure job longevity and includes onsite visits to both the individual and the employer. The Extended Services requirement for onsite contact is a minimum requirement for monthly onsite contact. Once the individual reaches the age of 25, ARS must assure extended service funding resources are available through another source. Youth receiving extended services funded by ARS will remain in stabilization status until the service is no longer needed and the youth is considered successfully employed or until four years of this service expires or the youth reaches the age of 25.

Once the case is closed successful (status 26), this service is transitioned to the provider responsible for funding, which may include payment through the individual's community employment services waiver plan funded by the Provider-led Shared Savings Entity (PASSE), a model of organized care created by Act 775 of 2017. Each PASSE is made up of governing providers who have entered into a partnership with an experienced program administration organization. If the individual is not on waiver, providers must generate funding to provide extended services.

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[17] , THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[18] , POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER SECTION 111 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Division of Workforce Services

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[19] , THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20] , POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND/OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Joseph Baxter

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Commissioner, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

#### FOOTNOTES

#### CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Joseph Baxter
Title of Signatory	Commissioner, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Date Signed	09/24/2020

#### ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of	



The State Plan must include	Include
the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	No
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative	

The State Plan must include	Include
approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	
3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	Yes
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.i. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	

The State Plan must include	Include
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an	

The State Plan must include	Include
appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Measurable Skill Gains	24.0%	24.0%	24.0%	25.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.*

#### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND)

##### A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

The Division of Services for the Blind is an independent consumer-controlled commission. Hence, this section is not applicable.

##### 2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

This agency is an independent commission.

##### 3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Division of Services for the Blind is an independent consumer-controlled commission. Hence, this section is not applicable.

#### B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

##### 1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

The Division of Services for the Blind has not requested a waiver of statewideness. Hence this section is not applicable.

##### 2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

The Division of Services for the Blind has not requested a waiver of statewideness. Hence, this section is not applicable.

##### 3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

This agency has not requested a waiver of statewideness. Hence this section is not applicable.

#### C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

##### 1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

The Division of State Services for the Blind (DSB) cooperates with other WIOA partners and can make referrals for adult literacy, higher education, DHS programs, and other services as needed. DSB and ARS have shared cooperative agreements with the 33 Institutions of Higher Education. DSB works in close partnership with schools, especially the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide vocational rehabilitation services and Pre-ETS to students. DSB also coordinates with the Department of Education's Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI) to serve high school students who are blind or visually impaired.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with the following DHS agencies DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services; DHS Division of Behavioral Health (DBHS); DHS Division of Children and Family Services; DHS Division of County Operations; DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS); and DHS Division of Youth Services. There are also the following interagency and non-profit agreements between Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), DDS, DBHS, Arkansas Department of Education Special Education Unit (ADE SEU), and DSB for increasing the number of individuals in competitive employment and expanding Supported Employment. An agreement between ADE SEU, ARS, and DSB regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

DSB shares broadcast engineering services and uses facilities at the Arkansas Educational Television Network to provide DSB's Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) and Newsline. People who are blind or visually impaired can access AIRS broadcasts of news and other informational programming 24 hours a day via computers, smart phones, laptops, and live streaming. The signal is also broadcast on the secondary audio (MTS) of AETN-4, and is carried by many cable TV systems. Newsline enables people who are blind or visually impaired to access over 300 newspapers and magazines via phone, Internet, digital talking-book player and Mp3 players.

DSB works cooperatively with service organizations and non-profits to raise awareness of blindness issues and promote the independence of people who are blind or visually impaired. These organizations include Arkansas Lions Clubs, the National Federation of the Blind Arkansas Chapter, the American Council of the Blind Arkansas Chapter. The Arkansas Lions Eye Bank and Laboratory at UAMS, Mid-South Sight and Hearing, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) and the Arkansas Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

## 2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is the lead agency Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) program, which is the State program that carries out section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, and DSB coordinates as needed. DSB has a cooperative agreement with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to have dual caseloads in regard to participants who are deaf—blind. DSB provides blindness services and ARS addresses deafness needs.

The Division of Services for the Blind Director sits on the ICAN Board. ICAN also attends DSB's annual meetings to provide onsite equipment updates and share information with DSB staff.

Additionally, DSB has our assistive technology lab to assist consumers who are blind or visually impaired. The Technology Director works closely with ICAN. DSB has referred consumers to ICAN to borrow equipment while waiting on theirs to be delivered and to assist consumers in repairing their equipment. DSB participates in ICAN's quarterly meeting and their yearly training with NanoPac. When a consumer being served by DSB's technology lab has secondary disabilities, ICAN assists the lab in identifying additional technology resources.

The DSB Business and Technology Unit continues to coordinate with the Division of Workforce Services (DWS) Office of Information and Technology to ensure its Data Loss Protection (DLP) project does not take any action that would affect access to adaptive software and accommodations by DWS employees who are blind or visually impaired.

The DSB Business and Technology Unit has tested accessibility on the AWARE data management system project, Office 365, and 508 Enhancements, a national project that will assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired in using Microsoft Share products. The DSB State Rehabilitation Technologist has been involved in testing some of the DWS Office 365 cloud programs. Assessments for assistive technology are completed by the DSB Business and Technology Unit, which has helped VR Counselors install computer equipment and perform other technology related tasks, so that they can provide basic technology support to participants in their respective geographic areas statewide. This initiative has also expanded the capacity of the DSB Business and Technology Unit.

DSB has formed partnerships with businesses that will train counselors on new assistive technology. DSB is among the agencies and organizations tasked with implementing the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act in Arkansas. Its partner World Services for the Blind has been designated to distribute technology equipment under the federal legislation. Through the Act, participants will be exposed to more technology available to assist them in their daily lives, job searches and workplaces.

DSB continues to collaborate with the Arkansas Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (ALBPH) and maintains several digital recorders to be used by staff to teach participants how to access digital talking books, both by standard mail distribution and through

the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) website. Additionally, available technology services can be offered and augmented by DSB's technology staff and lab.

Each year DSB coordinates with the Governor's Office, the Department of Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Office of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and related consumer groups to proclaim and celebrate the last week of June as Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week and observe her birthdate June 27. A deaf-blind consumer is chosen to accept the proclamation from the Governor at the State Capitol.

### 3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

DSB makes referrals of participants to commodity programs and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which are under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

### 4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

DSB maintains an active presence on numerous councils and committees, including: Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership, Arkansas Workforce Development Board, Interagency Steering Committee on Integrated Employment, Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council, The Arkansas Independent Living Council, Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) The Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities, Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, Youth Leadership Forum, Accessible Parking Taskforce, Local Workforce Development Boards across the state.

### 5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

DSB has no state use contracting programs.

## D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

### 1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

The designated state unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

DSB has agreed with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with a disability beginning at age 16 through the age of 21. Students with a disability who are eligible for VR services will receive their Pre ETS services through their Individualized Plan for Employment.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, regarding transition services to students who are blind or severely visually impaired and are in public schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI). The interagency agreement with the Department of Education outlines the roles and responsibilities, financial responsibility, determination of lead agency, and qualified personnel.

DSB also has cooperative agreements with Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Arkansas School for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI), and 33 Institutions of Higher Education.

DSB is a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses related issues. AITP has representatives from agencies and organizations including, but not limited to, Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website. AITP held a Summer Agency Connections conference in the summer of 2018 in Little Rock and sponsors bi-annual Transition Summits.

DSB sends representatives to these conferences and will continue to participate in 2020-2023. As a part of AITP at the local level, DSB reaches out to Local Education Area Supervisors in the school districts across the State to strengthen the relationship between the Department of Special Education and DSB. Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and regularly sends information by mail and email to contacts on the list. As part of AITP and the initiative to reach as many participants as possible under pre-employment transition services, DSB is reaching out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State and each high school across the State to give presentations/information on services available under pre-employment transition services. DSB has seven designated pre-employment transition services counselors and one Pre-ETS Area Manager to reach participants throughout the state.

DSB Transition Counselors assist participants in developing Individual Plans for Employment (IPE's) before students determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leave the school setting.

In regard to the development and approval of IPE's, all DSB participants, including transition students, receive services based upon their IPE. The counselor and the participant and/or a representative, as appropriate, develop the IPE jointly and mutually approve its contents. The IPE must be designed to achieve the specific employment outcome chosen by the individual and be consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and informed choice. The services, service providers, and all activities selected by the participant must be necessary to meet the employment outcome goal. The VR Counselor communicates with the participant and other service providers, such as ARS, to avoid duplication of services and to ensure consideration of comparable benefits, where applicable.

Potentially Eligible consumers are those students with a disability that have not applied and been determined eligible for the VR program. Once a student has been determined ineligible for VR services, they no longer qualify to receive Pre-ETS because they are no longer considered potentially eligible. A consumer who is determined eligible for VR services would receive their Pre-ETS services under the VR Case Type.

Secondary schools invite DSB to their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings to be part of the planning team to assist education agencies in preparing students who are blind or severely visually impaired for transition from school to post-school activities, such as employment, training, supported employment, and other VR services. The IEP outlines the roles and



responsibilities of DSB, the student, the school, and any other agency/organization involved in providing transition services.

In June of each year, DSB conducts Jump Start, a statewide career development program for high school students age 16 to graduation who are blind or severely visually impaired. Thirty (30) students from across the state are accepted into the program each year. DSB coordinates with the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) in the planning and operation of Jump Start. ASBVI holds its summer learning program for youth under age 16 at the same time that DSB has Jump Start for high school students, so the two agencies share cafeteria staff, infirmiry nurses, and security guards, and at least one ASBVI staff member is assigned to assist during Jump Start. DSB houses the students at ASBVI during the week (students go home on weekends). This three-week program exposes Jump Start students to the world of work and assisted them in transitioning from high school to competitive integrated employment or post-secondary education. Students were placed in part-time jobs appropriate for their skills, abilities, and interests. They worked in the mornings and during the afternoons and evenings participate in educational and recreational activities. Students learned independent living and job readiness skills; computer technology; and, if needed, orientation and mobility skills. Jump Start increases the students' confidence, social skills, and self—esteem. It also strengthens DSB's relationship with ASBVI.

DSB has an RSA-approved agreement with the Department of Education/Special Education, which provides information on financial responsibilities, the lead agency, and qualified personnel. DSB participates in monthly conference calls with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to ensure transparent fiscal monitoring and oversight of the Pre-ETS funds allocated to the State of Arkansas.

Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters, emails and information to contacts on the list. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB. DSB Pre-ETS counselors continue to make face to face visits to all schools across the state in their areas throughout the school year, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visionally Impaired. DSB Pre-ETS counselors also present and visit schools during transition fairs, open houses, parent nights, school staff meetings, and any other school functions they can attend to discuss available Pre-ETS services. DSB Pre-ETS counselors mail out letters annually to all schools across the state regarding the DSB Pre-ETS Jump Start program. The letters sent to the schools, provide information about DSB for potential referrals. Counselors have also hosted transition fairs for schools.

## 2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

### A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST- SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

DSB is working cooperatively with the Educational Services for the Visually Impaired, Department of Education, Special Education Teachers for the Visually Impaired, and local education areas to identify the technology needs, independent living needs, and educational training needs of identified students beginning at age 16 in the school system and through IEP meetings and planning meetings for those meeting the 504 regulations. Monthly meetings are held with our VR and Pre-ETS counselors and the school consultants to determine goals and objectives for students. Quarterly visits to schools are conducted to provide labor market

information, university application and scholarship information, and technical school opportunities available within the key labor market sectors of the State. DSB begins providing Pre-ETS services to eligible and potentially eligible students with a disability at age 16.

An updated agreement with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, regarding transition services to students who are blind or severely visually impaired, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) was developed to address the Section 113 Pre-employment transition activities that are authorized under WIOA and the requirements of Section 511. This MOU was created in conjunction with the Arkansas Rehabilitation Service Agency. The agreement was signed in January 2018. The interagency agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities, financial responsibility, determination of lead agency, and qualified personnel. DSB has reached out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State and each high school across the State to give presentations/information on services available under pre-employment transition services. DSB has seven designated pre-employment transition services counselors that provide information to eligible and potentially eligible students with visual impairments both in large print and electronically through the school system.

Pre-ETS services include five core areas: Job exploration counseling: these are services to assist the student in exploring the world of work and learning more about their interests, abilities and future career goals. Work-based learning experiences, (which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experience outside the traditional school setting including internships, that are provided in an integrated environment). Counseling on opportunities in comprehensive transition or enrollment in postsecondary educational programs. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. Instruction in self-advocacy/peer mentoring. DSB works to ensure our Pre-ETS transition counselors have a strong relationship with the local school districts and the local Work Force Development Boards. Summer work experiences, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and other work-based learning experiences have been implemented and will continue to expand as the population of high school students we serve increases.

For youth with a disability age 14 through 21 who are VR eligible, DSB Pre ETS counselors provide VR services. If a VR eligible youth with a disability also meets the definition of a student with a disability (beginning at age 16), DSB Pre ETS counselors will provide Pre ETS services to that consumer alongside their other VR services on their IPE. For students with a disability aged 16 through 21, who have not applied and been determined eligible for VR services and are therefore potentially eligible, they will receive Pre-ETS services as described above as soon as possible, but the time shall not exceed 90 days after the enrollment. Potentially Eligible consumers are those students with a disability that have not applied and been determined eligible for the VR program. Once a student has been determined ineligible for VR services, they no longer qualify to receive Pre-ETS because they are no longer considered potentially eligible. DSB, in collaboration the local education agency, will provide services to assist the student in developing and successfully achieving their Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) goal. On a statewide basis, DSB has seven designated Pre-ETS high school transition staff and one Pre-ETS Manager to provide leadership, information and referral, advocacy, technical assistance, and to promote collaboration among consumers, parents, adult service providers, and other service agencies. DSB will continue to have counselors assigned to each school district and high school. It is the role of the assigned counselors to provide outreach, technical assistance, information and referrals to the secondary education officials in their assigned schools and districts as well as to assure the provision of direct services to eligible youth.

Section 511 of WIOA intends that individuals with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities, must be afforded an opportunity to prepare for, obtain, maintain, advance in, or re-enter competitive integrated employment. The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education are working together to identify students that are blind and visually impaired that have been provided services in a sub-minimum wage setting. We are collaborating on plans to expand services to mutual consumers that includes a systematic approach to better identify consumers who could benefit from supported employment services (in an integrated setting, achieving at least the minimum wage) and are not receiving them at this time. A Memorandum of Agreement was developed and signed in 2017 through the team effort known as Vision Quest, which is an extension of Governor Asa Hutchinson's Employment First Taskforce. Vision Quest includes the following agencies: The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education. The proposal includes provisions for use of joint agency resources to ensure quality service delivery and long term supports for supported employment. With the cooperation of the partner agencies DSB will contact blind and visually impaired individuals every 6 months who are in sub-minimum wage situations to provide career counseling and information and referral services, designed to promote opportunities for competitive integrated employment.

DSB's Director joined the other Vision Quest Directors in the official signing of the Super MOU in winter of 2018. DSB currently does not serve any individuals in a sub-minimum wage or 511 situation.

**B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;**

DSB counselors assist participants in developing Individual Plans for Employment (IPE's) at age 14. The IPE is developed no later than 90 days after eligibility is determined. DSB works to develop IPEs at age 14 and every year until the student transitions out of high school. Secondary schools invite DSB's counselors to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, to be part of the planning team to assist education agencies in preparing students who are blind or severely visually impaired for transition from school to post-school activities, (such as employment, training, supported employment, and other VR services). DSB conducts independent living, technology and vocational assessments after the determination of eligibility in order to address planning needs. This information is shared with the education staff in determining career goals and objectives. DSB will provide accommodations according to the IPE that are not the responsibility of the LEA pursuant to FAPE regulations. Peer support and mentoring is arranged for the duration of transition services. The IEP and the IPE outline the roles and responsibilities of DSB, the student, the school, and any other agency/organization involved in providing transition services. DSB is working cooperatively with the Educational Services for the Visually Impaired, Department of Education, Special Education Teachers for the Visually Impaired, and local education areas to coordinate Pre-Employment Transition Services. New federal mandates require that DSB, in collaboration with local educational agencies, offer to transition age high school students with disabilities (ages 16-22) Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) using 15% of our federal allocation on an annual basis.

Pre-ETS services include: Job exploration counseling. Work-based learning experiences, (which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experience outside the traditional school

setting including internships, are provided in an integrated environment). Counseling on opportunities in comprehensive transition or enrollment in postsecondary educational programs. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. And, instruction in self-advocacy/peer mentoring.

In order to reach our goals, DSB is ensuring our seven Pre-ETS transition counselors and Pre-ETS Area Manager have a strong relationship with the local school districts and the local Workforce Development Boards. Summer work experiences, work place readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and other work-based learning experiences have been implemented and will continue to expand as the population of high school students we serve increases.

Pre-employment transition services as described above will be arranged throughout the school year and in the summer. Planning and implementation begin as soon as possible, and shall not exceed 90 days after the enrollment. On a statewide basis, DSB has designated high school transition staff to provide leadership, information and referral, advocacy, technical assistance, and to promote collaboration among consumers, parents, adult service providers, and other service agencies. DSB continues to have counselors assigned to each school district and high school. It is the role of the assigned counselors to provide outreach, technical assistance, information and referral to the secondary education officials in their assigned schools and districts as well as to assure the provision of direct services to eligible youth.

Transition in regards to Section 511 of WIOA intends that individuals with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities, must be afforded a full opportunity to prepare for, obtain, maintain, advance in, or reenter competitive integrated employment. The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education are working together to identify students that are blind and visually impaired that have been provided services in a sub-minimum wage setting. We are collaborating on plans to expand services to mutual consumers that includes a systematic approach to better identifying consumers who could benefit from supported employment services (in an integrated setting, earning at least the minimum wage) and are not receiving them at this time. A new Memorandum of Agreement was developed through the team effort known as Vision Quest, which is an extension of Governor Asa Hutchinson's Employment First Taskforce. Vision Quest includes the following agencies: The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education. The Agreement includes provisions for use of joint agency resources to ensure quality service delivery and long term supports for supported employment. With the cooperation of the partner agencies DSB will contact blind and visually impaired individuals every 6 months who are in sub-minimum wage situations to provide career counseling and information and referral services, designed to promote opportunities for competitive integrated employment. DSB's Director joined the other agencies Directors at the official signing of the MOU in the winter of 2018. DSB does not have any consumers employed in a 511 or less than minimum wage situation.

**C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;**

VR services delivered under WIOA do not remove, reduce, or change the school district's responsibility to deliver a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students served

under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. VR services supplement, but do not supplant services delivered through the school districts.

The roles and responsibilities for each partner agency as required by federal and state regulations are as follows: 1. Local education agencies provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education for students with visual impairment and those with low or no vision, including preparation for transition from school to work or other postsecondary activities. 2. DSB and the Department of Education, Special Education, ESVI and Teachers for the Visually Impaired assist with student transition from secondary school to work through postsecondary training, education, or direct placement services necessary to achieve a successful employment outcome. The Division of Services for the Blind and the Department of Education, Special Education share the financial responsibility of ensuring that the provision of pre-employment transition services are planned and implemented within the school system. 3. The Division of Developmental Disabilities Services in collaboration with the Division of Services for the Blind and the Department of Education, Special Education work to reduce the number of sheltered workshop placements by promoting competitive employment in an integrated setting to all low vision and blind participants. In order to promote independence and self-sufficiency, the agency shall provide support and services, within available resources, to assist customers enrolled in Medicaid waivers who choose to pursue gainful employment. Financial Responsibilities DSB and the Department of Education, Special Education, ARS, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services are committed to meeting financial responsibilities as required by law. Agency/Division heads for the organizations will periodically identify areas for improved programmatic and financial efficiencies and develop strategies to meet financial responsibilities, including joint appropriations requests from the state legislature and negotiations with federal agencies. Each party is financially responsible for the services it provides under its own laws and rules.

#### D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

For outreach and identification of students who are blind or severely visually impaired, DSB continues to coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors and Regional Certified Vision Consultants of Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). A collaborative data base of lists of transition students is maintained.

DSB Counselors will continue to make face to face visits to LEA Supervisors in their territories and will contact them at least twice a year by sending information by mail and emails. Counselors and their assistants serve as agency contacts. DSB make presentations at school assemblies, parent—teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on pre-employment transition services and how to access these services. DSB will continue outreach efforts to private, home, and accredited virtual schools. DSB's Pre-ETS team hosts a parent summit annually in August before school starts to inform students and parents of available resources. DSB brings in speakers to discuss assistive technology, college, workplace readiness, etc. DSB Pre-ETS team also hosts and attend transition fairs and parent summits around the state for students and parents to gather available resources from vendors participating in the events such as colleges, disability rights, community rehabilitation facilities. ARS, Arkansas Transition Services, etc. DSB has hosted transition fairs/parent summits in El Dorado, Dumas, Little Rock, Pine Bluff and Magnolia. DSB has attended transition fairs in Dumas, Dewitt, Lake Village, Greenwood, North Little Rock, Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Dermott, Cedar Ridge, Monticello and Crawford and Washington counties. DSB Pre-ETS staff will continue to host and attend these events around the state.

DSB will continue its system of mailouts and emails twice a year to area ESVI Consultants. In addition to the local outreach efforts, the Pre-ETS Area Manager will reach out to ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB. DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and solicit referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.

As a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), DSB is able to coordinate transition services and discuss related issues with AITP representatives from agencies and organizations, including, but not limited to Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website. AITP holds a Summer Agency Connections conference annually, and sponsors bi-annual Transition Summits. DSB sends representatives to these conferences.

As a part of AITP at the local level, DSB reaches out to Local Education Area Supervisors in the school districts across the State to strengthen the relationship between the Department of Education and DSB. Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and regularly sends information by mail and email to contacts on the list. As part of AITP and the initiative to reach as many participants as possible, DSB reaches out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State and each high school across the State to give presentations/information on services available under Pre-ETS. DSB has seven designated Pre-ETS counselors and one Area Manager that do outreach to participants throughout the state.

Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters, emails and information to contacts on the list semi-annually. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB. Outreach for the Pre-ETS and WIOA required activities that include: Job exploration counseling. Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships) that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible. Counseling and guidance on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

The procedures for outreach and identifying students who would benefit from these services are as follows: 1. All transition counselors engage with the LEA staff on a monthly basis to provide literature in large print and digitally by electronic means to be then provided to special education teachers throughout the state on the referral process, the core services provided under Pre-ETS, and how to access DSB services to engage in exploration of competitive integrated employment settings. 2. All DSB transition counselor staff make face-to-face visits with the nursing staff, school counselor staff, and special and regular education staff within each high school on at least a monthly basis to offer this information and to provide further clarification and to answer questions on the process, what the core services are under Pre-ETS and how to access those services. Referrals are taken both digitally and by paper referral process. 3. All DSB transition counselor staff along with the Statewide Field Administrator attend monthly meetings with ESVI and Teacher for the Blind meetings to discuss upcoming events and to identify students currently in sub-minimum wage situations that need

information and counseling on how to access DSB services to work towards competitive integrated employment.

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) reported that there are approximately 40 students in secondary education who are blind, visually impaired, or Deafblind between the ages of 16 through 21 to include 2 Deafblind students. DSB has identified 70 post-secondary students on the caseloads and 78 secondary students to include 2 secondary Deafblind students which is a total of the 148 students that DSB Pre-ETS counselors are currently serving. There are 92 VR eligible students and 56 potentially eligible students. Currently being served by DSB.

For the FFY 2019 grant DSB set aside \$989,572.65. Of this DSB has committed \$342,657.03 to paying for staff time and associated expenses as allowed. DSB expects to spend \$620,000 on providing the 5 required Pre-ETS activities. This will allow DSB to spend \$26,915.62 on authorized services.

#### E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

DSB develops agreements in response to: (1) state and federal laws and regulations, (2) results of needs assessments, (3) suggestions from consumer groups, and (4) recommendations of staff and stakeholders including those in the Workforce Services arena. DSB uses the RSA guideline template to develop cooperative agreements.

DSB has been a long-standing partner with the Arkansas Deaf blindness Project: Children and Youth with Sensory Impairment (CAYSI), formerly known as the Deaf/Blind Consortium. DSB refers participants to CAYSI and serves on its Advisory Committee, which provides training for parents and professionals to foster stronger partnerships among agencies who work with this population. The project maintains a deafblind registry and requests related information from DSB. DSB has worked with the Helen Keller National Center to improve services for those consumers who are deaf-blind and to provide training for DSB staff. DSB operates the Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS), which began as a private non-profit organization and is now part of the state agency. The organization's founders formed Friends of AIRS (FAIRS) to continue its support of the station. DSB leases facilities for AIRS from the PBS, which provides DSB with in-kind services in the form of engineering services and other technology.

#### F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

DSB maintains contractual agreements with private non-profit and for-profit agencies in the state to provide supported employment and extended services as applicable to our consumers with most significant disabilities, including youth with most significant disabilities. These services have been provided by World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, Goodwill Industries, Ed Davis Inc. Team Academy, Building Bridges, S.W. Chance, and Arkansas Support Network. A new vendor application is being utilized to improve client and vendor service delivery.

DSB continued to utilize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas Department of Education-Special Education Unit, Transition Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Division of Adult Services and Behavior Health Services. This MOU defines each agency's roles and responsibilities toward competitive integrated employment for individuals with most significant disabilities. This partnership also supports on-going Employment First activities for the state.

Supported employment is integrated competitive employment, or an individual working in an integrated employment setting towards integrated competitive employment. This includes customized employment. Each of the SE services providers provides extended services for 24 months or as long as the individual is employed.

Half of the funds that Arkansas receives under the supported employment state grant is used to support youth with the most significant blindness and low vision needs (up to age 24), and these youth may receive extended services (i.e., ongoing supports to maintain an individual in supported employment) for up to 4 years.

## G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

### 1. VR SERVICES; AND

DSB has designated a minimum of 26% of the workday of each counselor to be devoted to developing competitive integrated employment, internships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, and volunteer job site opportunities for all participants. DSB counselors serve as business consultants, because they are most familiar with the skills, training, and capabilities of their clients. This activity is done with the interest of the participant in mind. Counselors seek out employers who have career matches that meet the interest and abilities of the participant or it is done with the aspirations and future goals of the participant in mind. This way more territory is covered and the counselors can match potential careers to the individuals they directly support. DSB currently has 26 VR counselors performing this function. Counselors conduct outreach to businesses and provide information and demonstrations on accommodations and technology to employers. DSB tracks all business contacts and is working on a common system in conjunction with all the workforce partners to have a shared platform of business leads. DSB counselors play a significant role in sharing the business needs with other partners and, in turn, have access to other business leads developed by workforce partners.

DSB is in the process recruiting for a Business Engagement Coordinator position. The anticipated date for the position to be filled is April 2020. The addition of the Business Engagement Coordinator will strengthen existing and new partnerships with businesses and corporations to allow DSB clients more job opportunities in competitive wage industries.

DSB and other WIOA partners work together on the WIOA Business Engagement Committee to share information and provide information to employers on hiring individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, DSB has reached out to larger businesses to develop job site training placements and direct hire opportunities for DSB participants. DSB is currently working with Children's Hospital and Verizon Wireless on expedited interviews for candidates that meet the education and skill needs of these companies for current vacancies. Candidates are given an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and once selected on-the-job training is arranged. DSB has also arranged for internship opportunities within state government and will continue to expand this project.

### 2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

In regards to pre-employment transition services, tours and informational interviews of large employers like Fed—Ex, Heifer International, Wal-Mart Distribution Centers and JB Hunt have been arranged to expose students and youth to real world opportunities within the State.



Through local business and industry, pre-employment transition students and youth are exposed to work experiences within a call center environment, a manufacturing environment, and computer applications.

## H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

### 1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

DSB will continue its close working relationships with the DHS Division of Medical Services (DMS), which houses Medicaid; the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDS); and the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS). DSB has cooperative agreements outlining responsibilities and the provision of services of each agency to initiate Employment First activities. Each agency agrees to serve individuals with disabilities with a goal of competitive integrated employment. DSB partners with ARS with dual caseloads that has a similar agreement for the provision of services to State Medicaid recipients. DSB coordinates services with DBHS, DMS, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

### 2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

DSB will continue active working relationships with the DHS Division of Medical Services (DMS), which houses Medicaid; the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDS); and the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS). DSB has cooperative agreements outlining responsibilities and the provision of services of each agency to initiate Employment First activities. Each agency agrees to serve individuals with disabilities with the goal of competitive integrated employment with the DDS and DBHS. DSB partners with ARS with dual caseloads that has a similar agreement for the provision of services to State Medicaid recipients. DSB coordinates services with DBHS, DMS, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences DSB and the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities serve on the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses education—related issues. DSB also partners with DDS on Employment First Initiatives and APSE.

### 3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

DSB will continue active relationships with the DHS Division of Medical Services (DMS), which houses Medicaid; the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDS); and the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS). DSB has cooperative agreements outlining responsibilities and the provision of services of each agency to initiate Employment First Activities. Each agency agrees to serve individuals with disabilities with the goal of competitive integrated employment. . DSB along with ARS, DDS, and BHS have worked with DOL ODEP consultants to improve supported employment services for individuals with mental health issues. DSB coordinates services with DBHS, DMS, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

## I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

### 1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

#### A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

#### I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

DSB is currently serving 856 consumers and employs a total of 57 staff:

Field Services – (Total 37)

Field Administration – 3

Managers – 5

Counselors – 18

Administrative Support – 11

Central Office – (Total 20)

Director's Office – 1

Finance – 4

Administrative Support – 8

Business and Technology - 7

II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

Field Services – (Total 56)

Field Administration – 4

Managers – 5

Counselors – 28

Administrative Support – 19

Central Office – (Total 22)

Director's Office – 2

Finance – 4

Administrative Support – 8

Business and Technology - 8

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

Field Services – (Total 56)

Field Administration – 4

Managers – 5

Counselors – 28

Administrative Support – 19

Central Office – (Total 22)

Director's Office – 2

Finance – 4

Administrative Support – 8

Business and Technology - 8

## B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

### I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;

The Staff Development Coordinator maintains contact with the institutions of higher education and gathers data. The Coordinator reports this data to the Field Services Administrator and the Assistant Director. Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Rehabilitation Education and Research Program housed in the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources and Communication Disorders. The Spring 2018-2019 has 26 students enrolled, there are 23 full—time students, 3 part—time students, and 20 students who graduated.

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with an Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling. The Masters in Rehabilitation Teaching (MRT) program has been dissolved, but the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program will continue. Both the RCE and O&M programs are housed in the Counseling, Adult and Rehabilitation Education (CARE) degree Master of Arts. The Spring 2018-2019 has 80 students enrolled. Of these students there are 78 full—time students, 2 part—time students, and 32 graduates.

The University of Wisconsin-Stout Department of Counseling Psychology is primarily a graduate department, offers a master's degree (M.S.) in counseling specializing in community counseling. The department emphasizes the integration of multiculturalism and diversity into counseling psychology and is committed to multiculturalism broadly-defined in teaching, research, practice, and service. The Spring 2018-2019 has 38 students enrolled, there are 27 full—time students, 11 part—time students, and 19 graduates.

### II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

University of Arkansas at Fayetteville – 23 Full Time, 3 Part Time

University of Arkansas at Little Rock – 78 Full Time, 2 Part Time

University of Wisconsin-Stout – 27 Full Time, 11 Part Time

### III. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Rehabilitation Education and Research Program housed in the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources and Communication Disorders. The Spring 2018-2019 has 26 students enrolled, there are 23 full—time students, 3 part—time students, and 20 students who graduated.

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DSB has had students enrolled online at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) and The University of Wisconsin-Stout through a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) grant that UNT received in 2009 with the agreement that it would fund a limited number of VR Counselors outside of Texas. DSB does not currently have any counselors enrolled in the UNT program.

## 2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

DSB has cooperative agreements with each of the 33 colleges/universities in Arkansas in order to promote the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education.

To address current needs for qualified personnel, DSB posts vacancies on the state employment website [arstatejobs.com](http://arstatejobs.com), the statewide newspaper, Workforce Services offices, other state agencies, and college and university recruitment bulletins. It also sends job notices to the Arkansas American Council of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind for distribution. Recruitment efforts are ongoing to the 15 fully accredited graduate programs within TACE Region VI, including Arkansas colleges and universities in the region and those with a historically predominate minority enrollment.

Universities in Arkansas with Rehabilitation Counseling Programs include:

Institution: University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) Location: Fayetteville Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling and doctoral degrees in Rehabilitation and in Counseling Education.

Institution: University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) Location: Little Rock Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling.

Institution: The University of Wisconsin-Stout Department of Counseling Psychology is primarily a graduate department, offers a master's degree (M.S.) in counseling specializing in community counseling.

Effective July 1, 2019, all DSB vocational rehabilitation counselors were reclassified as either grade level GS06 Rehabilitation Counselor or GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. The GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor classification requires CRC certification. According to state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements, DSB now advertises for a GS08 position with the preferred qualification being a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows DSB to hire graduates with Bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for GS06 positions when there is no suitable applicant with a Master's degree with the condition the person will seek and obtain a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling within seven years of employment and will meet CRC certification or become eligible to sit for CRC certification within one year of receipt of the Master's degree.

Bachelor's degree or Non—MRC Master's degree — L051C Rehabilitation Counselor/GS06 — \$36,154.98 (annual) — \$17.3822 (hourly)

Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC)/CRC — L098C Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor/GS08 — \$45,009.95 (annual) — \$21.6394 (hourly)

The Staff Development section reviews the current training levels of all personnel and develops and monitors agency policy and procedure for training and retaining qualified personnel meet standards required by the Department of Education and other federal/state requirements. All DSB employees receive an annual personnel performance evaluation from their immediate supervisor, which is reviewed and approved by DSB Director. The evaluation considers the training each employee needs to fulfill job duties in providing services to our consumers.

DSB will continue to work closely with the universities to provide internship and practicum opportunities for students and notify universities when job openings become available. Students are recruited from university and college rehabilitation programs within the state to seek employment with DSB upon graduation. DSB maintains communication with the university programs including the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A), the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR), The University of Wisconsin-Stout. In addition, DSB will plan to meet quarterly with the universities to provide updates within the vocational rehabilitation field to give practitioner input, and to receive first—hand information regarding graduates from the MRC programs.

The agency actively recruits minorities and students with disabilities. Students, including minorities, are encouraged to join professional rehabilitation organizations such as the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) and the National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns (NAMRC). These rehabilitation professional organizations provide scholarship opportunities to individuals, including minorities, who major in the field of rehabilitation.

DSB revised VR Counselor job descriptions to update roles and responsibilities due to increasing duties, and also to assist with increasing salaries for DSB VR Counselors competitive to surrounding regions. Additionally, leadership is reviewing training and development opportunities to help with retention of counselors.

### 3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

#### A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE

REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH  
PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

The Arkansas Office of Personnel Management (OPM) continues to recommend the minimum qualifications, job descriptions and salary rates for specific classifications, based upon labor market surveys, which are then reviewed and approved by the legislature. The spring 2019 legislative session gave DSB the authority to pay tuition for its VR Counselors working on their CRCs. DSB is exploring ways to assist Area Field Supervisors with the costs of tuition to meet CSPD standards.

Internships are available to students in the rehabilitation programs across the state. DSB did not have any interns in FY 2019.

DSB recruits, and, to the degree possible, hires counselors with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or other closely related degree. DSB implements individual education plans for existing personnel to be retrained to meet certification standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Counselors have seven years to meet CSPD requirements from date of hire.

Effective July 1, 2019, all DSB vocational rehabilitation counselors were reclassified as either grade level GS06 Rehabilitation Counselor or GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. The GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor classification requires CRC certification. According to state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements, DSB now advertises for a GS08 position with the preferred qualification being a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows DSB to hire graduates with Bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for GS06 positions when there is no suitable applicant with a Master's degree with the condition the person will seek and obtain a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling within seven years of employment and will meet CRC certification or become eligible to sit for CRC certification within one year of receipt of the Master's degree. Internships are available to students in the rehabilitation programs across the State. DSB did not have any interns in FY 2019.

As of the December 2019 DSB Board meeting, the CSPD status is as follows: Field Services Administrator-Non certified; 5 VR Counselors with CRC. 1 VR Counselor anticipating taking CRC exam Spring 2020. 1 VR Counselor with LPC. 4 currently enrolled in CRC Master's level program. 6 pending enrollment in a CRC Master's level program. 5 Supervisors with CRC.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE  
REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION  
ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE  
EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

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Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Counselors have seven years to meet CSPD requirements from date of hire.

Effective July 1, 2019, all DSB vocational rehabilitation counselors were reclassified as either grade level GS06 Rehabilitation Counselor or GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. The GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor classification requires CRC certification. According to state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements, DSB now advertises for a GS08 position with the preferred qualification being a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows DSB to hire graduates with Bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for GS06 positions when there is no suitable applicant with a Master's degree with the condition the person will seek and obtain a Master's degree in

Rehabilitation Counseling within seven years of employment and will meet CRC certification or become eligible to sit for CRC certification within one year of receipt of the Master's degree. Internships are available to students in the rehabilitation programs across the State. DSB did not have any interns in FY 2019.

As of the December 2019 DSB Board meeting, the CSPD status is as follows: Field Services Administrator-Non certified; 5 VR Counselors with CRC. 1 VR Counselor anticipating taking CRC exam Spring 2020. 1 VR Counselors with LPC. 4 currently enrolled in CRC Master's level program. 6 pending enrollment in a CRC Master's level program and 5 Area Managers with CRC.

#### 4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

DSB staff must possess specific knowledge concerning the problems of blindness and be allowed the opportunity for career development as related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. DSB actively assesses the training needs of its employees and solicits their input regarding training needs. DSB surveys staff annually to determine the training or resources they require to perform their duties more efficiently and effectively. DSB also uses a state—approved personnel performance evaluation document to review an employee's performance and to identify individual training needs.

The Division of Services for the Blind works with ICAN to provide training on rehabilitation technology to staff. ICAN attends DSB's annual meeting each year. While at this meeting ICAN offers demonstrations and a chance for counselors to view new technology and talk with them about the technology. ICAN also offers trainings on this technology to staff. DSB participates in the ICAN trainings from NanoPac that occur each year on technology and software available for consumers who are blind.

Leadership development and capacity—building opportunities are offered through a wide variety of methods:

- U of A CURRENTS periodically surveys rehabilitation staff regarding training needs and develops courses and conferences based on the results or on requests by DSB and other agencies. In the last fiscal year, CURRENTS offered face-to-face trainings and teleconferences on topics including: Writing and Marketing Your Business Plan; All Paths Lead to Adult Life: Important Partnerships and Components of Quality Transition Planning for Students with Intellectual Disabilities Sessions 1 and 2; Making Ethical Decisions in the Vocational

Rehabilitation Process; Psychological Evaluations: Not Just for Eligibility; Using the DSM—5 Assessment Tools and International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) As Training Tools for Rehabilitation Counselors; Therapeutic Interventions with Aggressive Clients; Evaluating Vocational Communication Skills of Persons Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing; Multiculturalism and Disabilities; Using the Updated CRC Code of Ethics to Make Ethical Decisions in Everyday Tasks; Putting Together Your Business's Winning Team; Transition to Success for Individuals with Autism; Using Social Media to Plan Careers and Find Employment; Working with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS); Resources: You Got 'Em, Now Use 'Em; Job Success with Young Adults Diagnosed with DSM 5 Neurodevelopmental Disorders; The

Use of Interest Inventories and Other Techniques with People Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Changing Nature of Disability in the 21st Century; The Medical and Psychosocial Aspects of Multiple Sclerosis Parts 1 and 2; Rehabilitation of Persons with Bipolar Disorders; Rehabilitation of Persons with Depressive Disorders; Flipping the Script: Viewing Our Work Through a Social Model Lens; Working With Justice—Involved VR Clients; Using Qualitative Tools in Career Counseling; and Backs in a Flash.

- In-house training is provided through DSB's Quality Assurance Coordinator, Field Administrator, and other experienced, credentialed professional staff; DSB's annual Statewide meeting; the annual Field Services meeting; periodic training meetings; and one-on-one training which is made available to all staff depending upon the need. Information is distributed at Director's meetings, Supervisors' meetings, emails and the agency website. Training is also purchased from outside sources, such as the Older Individuals Who Are Blind Training provided by Mississippi State University.

- Staff are encouraged to participate in professional, service, and consumer organizations, such as the National Rehabilitation Association, Lions Clubs, the National Federation of the Blind, the American Council of the Blind, and the Arkansas Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), and opportunities are available to attend organizations' state and national conferences.

Retention of qualified personnel is addressed through CEU credit for staff training, as well as opportunities for expanding skills and knowledge in a variety of areas.

#### **B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.**

Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

DSB staff must possess specific knowledge concerning the problems of blindness and be allowed the opportunity for career development as related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services.

DSB actively assesses the training needs of its employees and solicits their input regarding training needs. DSB surveys staff annually to determine the training or resources they require to perform their duties more efficiently and effectively. DSB also uses a state—approved personnel performance evaluation document to review an employee's performance and to identify individual training needs.

- In-house training is provided through DSB's Quality Assurance Coordinator Database Administrator, Field Administrator, and other experienced, credentialed professional staff;



DSB's annual Statewide meeting; the annual Field Services meeting; periodic training meetings; and one-on-one training which is made available to all staff depending upon the need.

Information is distributed at Director's meetings, Supervisors' meetings, emails, the agency website. Training is also purchased from outside sources.

- Staff are encouraged to participate in professional, service, and consumer organizations, such as the National Rehabilitation Association, Lions Clubs, the National Federation of the Blind, the American Council of the Blind, and the Arkansas Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), and opportunities are available to attend organizations' state and national conferences.

Retention of qualified personnel is addressed through CEU credit for staff training, as well as opportunities for expanding skills and knowledge in a variety of areas.

## 5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

DSB has been a long—standing partner with the Arkansas Deafblindness Project: Children and Youth with Sensory Impairment (CAYSI), formerly known as the Deaf/Blind Consortium. DSB refers participants to CAYSI and serves on its Advisory Committee, which provides training for parents and professionals to foster stronger partnerships among agencies who work with this population. The project maintains a deafblind registry and requests related information from DSB.

DSB has accepted an invitation from the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) to become a member of its National Community of Practice, formerly known as state affiliates. The group is currently composed of 38 organizations and agencies, with more being added as responses are received from invitations that were sent out by HKNC.

DSB provides interpreter services for communication with persons with limited English-speaking ability on a contractual basis. In addition, one of the Area Field Supervisors speaks Spanish and French and understands Portuguese from having lived in Brazil (Central Arkansas has a community of Brazilians). Another Area Field Supervisor speaks Norwegian, Icelandic, Danish and Swedish languages. A member of the Business and Technology staff is fluent in Spanish. DHS has an in—house, certified Spanish interpreter in Miller County. These communication resources can be utilized as needed to serve participants.

Reader service, guide service, and any special adaptive equipment are made available to applicants for services, DSB participants, and DSB personnel. Information is also available in the medium of choice for persons making application for DSB services and for persons with disabilities who are employed by DSB.

## 6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

DSB is a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses education—related issues. AITP has representatives from agencies and organizations, including, but not limited to Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website.

Through the AITP, local issues are addressed by local teams. The local teams provide oversight to ensure that transition goals and services are in place by the time a child becomes eligible, as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

DSB works with Arkansas Workforce Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education to plan and develop pre-employment transition services and to coordinate services for individuals being served dually and under the PROMISE grant. The Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education staff provide training and information on transition services to vocational rehabilitation and workforce services staff. In turn, vocational rehabilitation staff, both DSB and ARS train and collaborate with Education and Workforce to provide training on how to establish work based learning experiences, providing job exploration counseling and counseling on opportunities in enrollment in post-secondary counseling, as well as cross training on instructional models in supported employment. Our agencies work together towards utilizing best practices on Section 101, IDEA, ADA and the Individual Education Plan (IEP). DSB's transition coordinator participates in monthly meetings with ESVI staff and teachers for the visually impaired.

## J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

### 1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

#### A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

In December 2019, DSB conducted a statewide needs assessment to measure the effectiveness in providing services, and assess possible needs. The DSB Quality Assurance team used email, and traditional postal mail to send surveys to DSB consumers, DSB staff, DSB partners, and employers. In cases for which email addresses were available, an email with a brief description of the needs assessment, instructions for completing the online survey, and a direct link to the survey were provided to recipients. In total 451 surveys were emailed: 377 consumer surveys, 52 staff surveys, and 22 partner surveys. In cases for which email addresses were not available, surveys were sent by traditional postal mail. In total, 1,676 surveys were mailed. 1,313 employer surveys and 363 consumer surveys. Surveys were completed in January 2020.

To ensure that outlined needs are being addressed, DSB plans to focus more extensively on conducting assessments via various research methodologies, implementing strategic action plans, and facilitating systematic progress reviews to measure effectiveness.

Based on the needs assessment results, it is recommended that DSB partners more consistently with employers, the Workforce Development System, and various other community rehabilitation programs in an effort to provide more job services and training opportunities to those who are most significantly disabled and those who are underserved.

Because the needs assessment results suggest that those who require long-term support and extended services to maintain employment, those who reside in rural communities, and Veterans are the most underserved, it is recommended that DSB create more outreach initiatives to engage with these populations.

Additional considerations may be given to identifying, coordinating and providing transition career services and pre-employment transition services to youth and students with disabilities.

Needs Assessment results suggest that those with the most significant disabilities are most in need a job services, with 33% of respondents stating “job development and placement” as an essential service, 27% stating “employment preparation” as an essential service, 23% stating that “on-the-job training” as an essential service, and 17% stating “soft skills development” as an essential service.

#### B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

Needs Assessment results suggest that 38% of consumers served are of a racial/ethnic minority group, with 29% reporting as Black or African-American, 7% reporting as Hispanic/Latino, 1% reporting as a Mix of two or more races, and 1% reporting as Asian. Overall, transportation, job services, and training present the greatest barriers to employment for this group.

#### C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

Needs Assessment results suggest that those who require long-term support and extended services to maintain employment, those who reside in rural communities, and Veterans are the most underserved, with 53%, 43% and 43% respectively reporting these categories. In particular, job placement and transportation were listed most frequently as barriers to employment for this population. Specifically, one consumer, who identified as residing in a rural area stated that, “living outside of the city limits” and not having adequate transportation impeded upon employment opportunities while another consumer, who expressed a need for extended services, stated that there is a “lack of employer confidence” when hiring those with disabilities. As such, outreach initiatives to engage those who require long-term support and extended services to maintain employment, those who reside in rural communities, and Veterans are imperative. In detail, such initiatives should center on providing information about the job services and transportation services provided through the VR program.

#### D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

Needs Assessment results suggest that at least 50% of respondents have worked with individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Similar to results collected for the minority population as well as results for those who are unserved or underserved by the VR program, assessment results suggest that job services are the most essential needs for those who are served through the workforce development system. Specifically, more than 71% of the respondents noted job placement, work-place readiness skills, and on-the-job training as recurring barriers to employment for those who have been served through the workforce development system in some capacity.

#### E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

Needs Assessment results suggest 24% of consumers who responded are students or youth with disabilities who may be able to benefit from pre-employment transition services or other transition services. Of this population, the majority cites training, transportation, and job services as the most significant barriers to employment. Because approximately 50% of those who were identified as youth with disabilities referenced a need for training and job services, specifically, a strong consideration of expanding pre-employment transitions services such as work-place readiness skills, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary enrollment opportunities, and career exploration will be imperative moving forward.

## 2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

Needs Assessment results suggest that community rehabilitation programs within the State need to establish, develop and improve in efforts to provide job services and independent living skills, with 57% and 29% respectively reporting these categories. Consistently, among multiple populations of consumers, partners, businesses, and staff, it is noted that consumers who are served by the VR program need effective job services such as workplace readiness skills, job placement, and on-the-job training. Additionally, it is stated that independent living skills may present a barrier in consumers obtaining effective job services. However, the surveys of partners and staff suggest that the limited availability of service providers may hinder effective rehabilitation for VR consumers.

## 3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

Needs Assessment results suggest that additional research is needed in this area. Although the need assessment results suggest that those who are classified as youth with disabilities, including student with disabilities, cite training, job services and transportation among their greatest barriers to employment, the assessment did not measure how such transition and pre-employment transition services are coordinated with external agencies as outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Currently, the agency is still receiving guidance, through training and technical assistance, on what's allowable for pre-employment transition services as outlined under WIOA. For this reason, additional guidance and research is needed to properly assess the extent and effectiveness of coordinated efforts.

## K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

### 1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

Basis for Estimates—DSB used the disability compendium report, population growth, the incidence of blindness, and historical data as the basis to project the number of individuals to be served through Part B of Title I and the number of supported employment cases to be served through Part B of Title VI.

Estimates for Part B of Title I:

In the Department of Human Services Annual Report for State Fiscal Year 2019, DSB reported 856 participants had been served by the vocational rehabilitation program. Of the 856 participants 390 participants were minorities. Therefore, DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,000 participants at a total cost of \$4,516,818 (\$4,516 per participant) beginning in FFY 2021. Of this number, it is projected that 400 will be minorities.

In addition to a growing Hispanic population, Arkansas has one of the highest Marshallese populations in the United States. In the 2010 Census count for Arkansas, 4,324 people identified themselves as Marshallese, placing the state as having the highest Marshallese population in the continental United States and the second highest overall (with Hawaii having 7,412). The Compact of Free Association (COFA), which allows the Marshallese to live and travel freely and at—will between the Marshall Islands and the United States, will end in 2023.

Estimates for Part B of Title VI:

As an agency DSB is working to emphasize and prioritize supported employment with participants. Therefore, DSB estimates it will serve 15 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of \$120,000 (\$8,000 per participant).

#### Estimates of Eligible Participants:

Based on statistical reporting derived from the American Community Survey, an overall rate of 2.9% for visual disability for the Arkansas population aged 16 to 64 showed approximately 18,000 persons in Arkansas might be eligible for and could receive vocational rehabilitation services from DSB.

### 2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

#### A. THE VR PROGRAM;

DSB conducted annual estimates for Federal Fiscal Year 2021. Needs Assessment results suggest 38% of consumers served are of a racial/ethnic minority group, with 29% reporting as Black or African-American, 7% reporting as Hispanic/Latino, 1% reporting as a Mix of two or more races, and 1% reporting as Asian. Based on the internal reports that DSB prepares, DSB served 856 participants during the State Fiscal Year of which 390 were minorities or 45%. Therefore, DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,000 participants of which it is projected that 400 or 40% will be minorities. Note: In addition to a growing Hispanic population, Arkansas has one of the highest Marshallese populations in the United States. In the 2010 Census count for Arkansas, 4,324 people identified themselves as Marshallese, placing the state as having the highest Marshallese population in the continental United States and the second highest overall (with Hawaii having 7,412). The Compact of Free Association (COFA), which allows the Marshallese to live and travel freely and at—will between the Marshall Islands and the United States, will end in 2023.

#### B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

DSB conducted annual estimates for Federal Fiscal Year 2021. Needs Assessment results show that participants most needed job development and placement. These services are part of the Supported Employment contracts that DSB maintains with vendors and can be used to provide the essential services to DSB consumers as indicated in the needs assessment. DSB estimates it will serve 15 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of \$120,000 (\$8,000 per participant).

#### C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

NA

### 3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

NA

### 4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

DSB is not currently under an order of selection. DSB conducted an annual assessment for Federal Fiscal Year 2021. DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,000 participants at a total cost of \$4,516,818 (\$4,516 per participant). This comes from the estimated clients served using DSB's internal reports and the total grant award that DSB receives. Of this number, it is

projected that 400 will be minorities. DSB estimates it will serve 15 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of \$120,000 (\$8,000 per participant).

#### L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

##### 1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

The DSB Board, an independent commission, approved the goals and priorities.

##### 2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

DSB developed the following goals, strategies, and performance measures for PY 2020 and 2021, based on WIOA, RSA guidance, recommendations by the DSB Board, and the most recent comprehensive, statewide needs assessment. Below are the goals, as approved by the DSB Board: Goal 1: Increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired. This goal addresses the identified needs in our CSNA to include job services, job development and placement, on-the-job training, and soft skills development. Goal 2: Increase Pre-Employment Transition Services to high school students; and increase transition services to out-of-school youth. This goal addresses the need for Pre-ETS to include training and job services. Goal 3: Expand outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as those who are unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders. Goal 4: Increase coordination with employers. Goal 3 and 4 address the need for job placement and training.

Goal 1: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: VR Counselors will schedule and attend face-to-face job exploration meetings to interview human resource professionals regarding the types of jobs they have, and the skills needed to do those jobs.

Performance Measure:

- A minimum of two employer job exploration meetings will be scheduled per month.

PY 2020-2021:

- Counselors will make 2 contacts per month for each client in job-readiness status.
- DSB will conduct training for staff on conducting outreach.
- Quality Assurance will develop a new method of tracking employer contacts in AWARE and Salesforce.

Strategy: VR Counselors will ensure that participants in job ready status are actively seeking employment.

Performance Measures:

- VR Counselors will require three job contacts per week
- Assist job ready participants with registration at Workforce Services
- Assist job ready participants with registering and applying for careers available through the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP)

- Assist participants with registering and applying for jobs through employer internet accessible application processes with private, federal, state and non-profit employers.

PY 2020-2021:

- All employer contacts will be entered in the employer module in AWARE.
- DSB will implement a more effective use of the employer module.
- DSB will utilize the Salesforce program for tracking employer contacts.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment.

Performance Measures:

- Through the DSB Small Business program, participants will be provided access to Small Business Association trainings and the Arkansas Secretary of State's trainings on small business enterprises.
- The counselors will schedule job shadowing experiences with participants who are blind/visually impaired that have maintained successful businesses.
- Each self-employment proposal submitted by a participant will be reviewed by a team composed of the Field Services Administrator, the Small Business Coordinator, and the participant's VR Counselor to ensure that the proposal is realistic and sustainable before it is approved and any funds are provided.
- A brochure will be developed to provide interested consumers with information about DSB's small business self-employment program.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will coordinate a Small Business team to review proposals.
- Provide training for VR counselors on what is needed to complete a small business proposal.
- Revise the policy and procedures for funding small businesses.

Strategy: DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will refer participants to World Services for the Blind, Alpha Pointe, the Louisiana Center for the Blind, Sources, Goodwill and other providers as necessary for additional skills training, including, but not limited to soft skills and work readiness training to assist participants in improving their probability of securing competitive integrated employment.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will work with provider agencies to develop more trainings for high in demand jobs for the blind and visually impaired participants.
- DSB will refer participants to Apprenticeship programs across the state.

- DSB will ensure that appropriate guidelines are in place to monitor the providers and trainings.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will provide benefits counseling for 100% of clients, adults, students and youth on SSI and SSDI and conduct a one-on-one benefits analysis.
- Area Supervisors will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors are providing all SSI and SSDI VR participants with benefits counseling.
- Counselors will make participants aware of benefits counseling at the time of application, at the time of IPE's, and at the time of closure.

PY 2020-2021:

- All new counselors will receive benefits counseling training.
- Current counselors will receive benefits counseling updates.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and interested in employment to VR services.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will refer 100% of older blind individuals who are interested in employment to VR services.

PY 2020-2021:

- Counselors will refer 100% of OIB that are interested in employment to VR services.
- VR counselors will make contact with agencies that serve older individuals such as Green Thumb, AAA to seek referrals, and to educate these agencies about DSB services.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers.

Performance Measure:

- Each year, each counselor will select one individual from his/her caseload as an area Consumer of the Year (COY) and nominate the individual as a candidate for the overall state Consumer of the Year.
- DSB will award area COY's and their employers with trophies/framed certificates and related publicity.

PY 2020-2021:

- Counselors will recognize a COY in each area and nominate them for the state COY.
- DSB will honor the state COY and employer at their annual meeting in December.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment.

Performance Measures:



- DSB will provide trainings on the use and function of common assistive technology devices for the blind and visually impaired.

PY 2020-2021:

- The Assistive Technology staff will develop trainings that can be modified for small and large employers.
- DSB will provide outreach and training to community organizations on technological advances in low vision and blindness.
- DSB will continue to provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of participants.
- DSB staff will continue to meet participants at Workforce Services offices, including DSB sponsored accessible kiosks, to assist participants in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning.

Performance Measures:

- Novice counselors will attend a specific orientation to VR issues and will participate in specialized training through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association or other qualified sources.
- Novice counselors will be exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans.

PY 2020-2021:

- Novice counselors will attend Immersion training during their first six months.
- Counselors will attend specialized training with Louisiana Center for the Blind, Mississippi State University and other training opportunities.
- DSB will utilize UofA Currents for professional trainings.
- DSB will utilize on-line training opportunities.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in transition and job ready exploration to allow experienced participants to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced participants.

Performance Measures:

- Peer mentoring will be used to connect participants interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support.
- Area Consumers of the Year will be encouraged to provide peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs.

PY 2020-2021:

- Peer Mentoring program will be implemented with our Pre-ETS program.

- COY's will provide mentoring.
- Participants will be connected to DSB Vendor Operators
- Peer mentoring will be provided during DSB's Jump Start Pre-ETS program.
- Information will be provided on NFB and ACB organizations and utilize their members as mentors.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among the core partners of WIOA.

Performance Measure:

- DSB staff will be active members of the Workforce Investment Boards and WIOA planning committees throughout the State.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB staff will continue to be active members on the local Workforce Investment Boards
- DSB executive staff will be active members of the State Workforce Investment Board and participate on committees.
- DSB executive staff will participate with the WIOA Executive Roundtable with all partners and serve on sub-committees to coordinate services
- DSB staff will attend bi-annual partner trainings.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will arrange for and accompany job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits.
- DSB will assist participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities.

PY 2020-2021:

- Counselors will connect participants to campus tours
- Counselors will assist students with FAFSA and college applications
- Counselors will assist students with campus acclimation and introduce them to campus disability services.

Goal 2: Increase Pre-Employment Transition Services to students; increase transition services to out-of-school youth.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all Pre-ETS students and youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for Pre-ETS students to explore potential career opportunities.

- DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for Pre-ETS students.
- DSB will arrange for informational interviews for Pre-ETS students to explore job opportunities.
- DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for Pre-ETS students to explore career fields.
- DSB will accompany Pre-ETS students to career seminars and career fairs.
- DSB will arrange for and accompany Pre-ETS students to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will work with more vendors and businesses around the state to develop work experience, job shadowing, informational interviews, and career exploration opportunities.
- Pre-ETS counselors will explore career options with students and set up work experience and volunteer opportunities for students to gain “real experiences”.
- DSB will provide a three-weeks “Jump Start” program in which students will hear from company representatives, explore careers and gain work experience.
- Pre-ETS students will participate in job shadowing opportunities and informational interviews.
- DSB will conduct transition fairs and accompany students to other transition/career fairs.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will sponsor or participate in at least one training or event that will bring together transition partners for the purpose of exchanging information that will specifically benefit students who are blind or severely visually impaired.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will conduct local transition summits with school districts across the state.
- DSB will participate with trainings of our core partners Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), Arkansas Career Education (ACE), and Career and Technical Education (CTE).
- DSB will coordinate a training with our Arkansas School for the Blind and Vision Impaired (ASBVI) project.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed.

Performance Measures:

- Counselors and/or Rehabilitation Assistants will coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of transition students.

- The Pre-ETS Manager will review the database to insure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants, who input the local information.

PY 2020-2021:

- Pre-ETS counselors will contact LEA Area Supervisors and have face to face meetings with school staff.
- Referrals identified by LEA's are sent to Pre-ETS counselors and Pre-ETS Manager for review.
- The LEA spreadsheet will be updated monthly.
- Monthly reports of school contacts will be provided to the Pre-ETS Manager.

Strategy: Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to ensure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school.

Performance Measure:

- Area Supervisors will monitor this during case reviews to ensure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE.

PY 2020-2021:

- Pre-ETS Counselors will develop and update IPE's of transition students before they graduate.
- Pre-ETS Manager will review monitor the cases to ensure the IPE's are completed.
- Pre-ETS Counselors will facilitate a meeting with high school staff and college disability services for those attending college.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

Performance Measure:

- Annually, DSB will invite ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to a Parent Summit with Counselors to provide information about assistive technology; rights and responsibilities; available resources and services; benefits counseling; and funding for college and career start-up costs.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will conduct an annual Back to School Summit in August, 2020.

Strategy: DSB will continue to provide assessments and services to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, benefits counseling, and rights and responsibilities as an informed participant.

Performance Measures:

- Formal assessments for assistive technology will be performed by Tech Lab staff in accordance with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering.

- Counselors will arrange for training for Pre-ETS students and youth to acquire independent living skills and technological skills for them to participate in career exploration services.

PY 2020-2021:

- Pre-ETS counselors arrange trainings in independent living skills and assistive technology for students and youth.
- DSB will consult with additional vendors to provide independent living and technology training.
- Pre-ETS counselors will refer students for appropriate trainings.
- DSB Tech Lab will provide assistive technology trainings.
- DSB's will provide assistive technology through its Assistive Technology Loaner program.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will present at school assemblies, parent teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on Pre-ETS and how to access these services.
- DSB will establish an information clearinghouse and schedule demonstration labs on selected high school campuses to inform parents, students, and education professionals of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost—effective resources available to them.
- DSB will continue its system of mail outs and e-mails to public schools.
- DSB will continue efforts to reach private, home, and accredited virtual schools.

PY 2020-2021:

- Pre-ETS counselors will have face to face meetings with the schools
- Pre-ETS counselors will visit and present information at open houses, parents' night, and staff meetings.
- DSB will annually mail out letters to schools with information about our Pre-ETS program.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI).

Performance Measures:

- DSB will continue its system of mail outs and e-mails twice a year to area ESVI representatives.
- In addition to the local networking efforts, the Pre-ETS Manager will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB.

- DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.

PY 2020-2021:

- Pre-ETS staff will meet with the ESVI team as a group to strengthen our working relationship.
- Pre-ETS counselors and ESVI consultants will refer students to each other's agency for appropriate services.
- Pre-ETS Manager will provide updated list of students to the counselors.
- Pre-ETS staff will attend the annual AER conference.

Goal 3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB will expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will formulate an alliance with non-profit organizations established in the Delta region, to provide information and soft skills trainings to individuals living in poverty in the Delta region of the State of Arkansas.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will coordinate meetings with non-profits and agencies that are established in the Delta region, to provide information and trainings to individuals living in the Delta region of the state.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability.

Performance Measure:

- Each VR Counselor will staff at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB staff will exhibit and make presentations at career fairs, health fairs, and other events in their area.

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith-based groups.

Performance Measures:

- Counselors will make at least four outreach efforts to faith-based groups in each of their geographic areas annually.
- Counselors will make at least two outreach efforts to minority groups to include Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of their geographic areas annually.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will develop a new program to reach faith-based groups.
- DSB will provide outreach training for their counselors and staff.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will send supervisors/administrators to these conferences to interact with participants and make presentations as requested.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB staff will attend the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and the American Council for the Blind (ACB) state and national conference.
- DSB will participate with other state conferences of blindness and visual impairment organizations to network on issues faced by other states and gain ideas about how to better serve individuals.

Goal 4: DSB will increase coordination with employers.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities and work experience in their chosen career field on the job site.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for job ready adult participants to explore potential career opportunities.
- DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for job ready adult participants.
- DSB will arrange for informational interviews for job ready adult participants to explore job opportunities.
- DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for job ready adult participants to explore career fields.
- DSB will accompany job ready adult participants to career seminars and career fairs.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB counselors and Business Engagement Coordinator will develop more opportunities for participants to tour businesses and explore career opportunities.
- DSB counselors will arrange job shadowing, informational interviews and volunteer opportunities for participants to explore career fields.
- DSB counselors will accompany participants to career seminars and career fairs.

Strategy: DSB will become Chamber of Commerce members.

Performance Measure:

- VR counselors will make contact with at least two members of their local Chamber of Commerce per month to learn about the trends and needs of those businesses.

PY 2020-2021:

- Each DSB office will join their local Chamber of Commerce.
- DSB will obtain updated list of chamber business members.
- VR counselors and Business Engagement Coordinator will contact chamber businesses.
- DSB staff will attend Chamber of Commerce events.

Strategy: VR Counselors will conduct public speaking engagements.

Performance Measure:

- Counselors will conduct at least one presentation per year to the local area Lions, Rotary, Civitan, or Kiwanis Club in order to form relationships with local leaders.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB counselors will conduct local presentations.
- Counselors will conduct COY presentations at local civic community clubs.

Strategy: DSB management staff will connect with employers in each economic development district.

Performance Measures:

- DSB staff will establish at least one ongoing internship site per region for DSB participants.
- DSB staff will work in conjunction with the Arkansas Apprenticeship program to locate apprenticeship opportunities for participants.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB Business Engagement Coordinator will connect with employers in each economic development district.
- DSB Business Engagement Coordinator will develop internships and apprenticeship opportunities for participants.

#### SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS:

Goal 1: DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with organizations such as World Services for the Blind, Job Connections, AEDD Inc., Easter Seals, Building Bridges, and Goodwill to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will join our partner ARS to conduct at least one meeting with providers to discuss ways to increase SE services to rural areas.

PY 2020-2021:



- DSB and ARS will conduct a meeting with providers to increase SE services in rural areas.

Goal 2: DSB will increase Supported Employment services to transition students and out of school youth.

Strategy: Counselors will determine whether students or youth are candidates for SE during the employment planning process.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will train new staff and provide updates to veteran staff on identifying and providing SE to youth who may be appropriate for supported employment and how to refer them to providers.

PY 2020-2021:

- Staff training on Supported Employment and Customized Employment will be conducted.

Goal 3: DSB will increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants.

Performance Measure:

- At least one presentation or training will be made to educate SE providers about blindness and visual impairments.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will provide training for SE providers on blindness and vision impairments.

### 3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

#### A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

DSB conducted a statewide needs assessment to measure the effectiveness in providing services, and assess possible needs for the Federal Fiscal Year 2021. The DSB Quality Assurance team used email, and traditional postal mail to send surveys to DSB consumers, DSB staff, DSB partners, and Employers. In the Comprehensive Needs Assessment consumers indicated a desire for job services and extended supports on the job. The goals and priorities that DSB is focused on will support consumers in receiving more effective job services and improve connections with employers to assist consumers in long term job supports.

#### B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

DSB has continued to track and maintain an internal analysis of the WIOA performance measures. DSB uses annual reports, monthly reports, and the required federal reports to track and evaluate its performance throughout the program year. Using the ETA 9169 for PY17 and PY18, DSB was able to track the state performance on Measurable Skill Gains and work with ARS to develop a joint expected level for PY20 of 24% and PY21 of 25% for the state. DSB

continues to track the employment rates for the program years to determine if they are improving and to measure the effectiveness of DSB's strategies. The data DSB gathers from these reports is used in consultation with its Independent Commission and RSA, to develop a baseline of performance percentages for the agency to move forward in setting applicable performance standards under section 116 of WIOA.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

DSB has not been monitored since 2011 but is scheduled for a monitoring visit in 2020. DSB has worked with RSA and WINTAC to improve effectiveness in serving participants. Under guidance from RSA and WINTAC, DSB has changed the manner in which it provides Pre-ETS services to both eligible and potentially eligible consumers. DSB has 7 counselors who serve all students with a disability, and youth age 14-16. These 7 counselors are overseen by the new Pre-ETS Manager to ensure that those who are VR eligible receive VR and Pre-ETS services as appropriate while those who are potentially eligible receive all applicable Pre-ETS services. These counselors manage a VR caseload and a separate Potentially Eligible consumer caseload to ensure that these services are received, and funds are expended correctly. As part of DSB's work to better meet RSA guidance our Pre-ETS counselors have been trained on and implemented a time allocation system.

DSB counselors have received intensive on-site training at selected training centers for the blind and visually impaired. Training is provided on-the-job and monthly meetings are held with the Field Administrator regarding best practices, outreach, and locating work experience locations for the students. Monthly quality assurance reporting forms are turned in regarding each student and the 5 authorized PETS activities to verify that VR counselors are meeting the goals and objectives set forth in monthly meetings and so that ongoing supports can be arranged as needed.

Additionally, DSB has received intensive feedback on both our VR and Vending Facility Program (VFP) policy from RSA and WINTAC. This feedback has been used to improve and revamp DSB's policy manual with several chapters being prepared to move forward in the promulgation process. DSB continues to draft new policy based on provided feedback and work to ensure that all new policy meets the guidance and recommendations provided by RSA.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION.  
IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES

NA

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

NA

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

NA

D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

NA

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Most Significant Disability:

Most significant disability includes individuals eligible for DSB services with the most significant disability whose impairment severely limits four or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time.

More Significant Disability:

More significant disability includes individuals eligible for DSB services with a significant disability whose impairment limits three functional capacities in terms of employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time.

Significant Disability:

Significant disability includes individuals eligible for DSB services with a significant disability whose impairment limits one or two functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

Should DSB implement an order of selection, it will elect to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

DSB's activities for supported employment services and programs funded under both Titles I and VI-B are intended to increase the number of persons receiving supported employment services and to improve employment outcomes for these individuals. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment conducted for Federal Fiscal Year 2021 emphasized the need for participants to have access to job placement, development, and extended job supports such as coaching or on the job training. DSB believes that the most effective and efficient strategy to accomplish this is by expanding and strengthening its collaborative linkages with relevant state agencies and/or private not-for-profit agencies for the provision of supported employment and extended support services. No more than 2.5% of supported employment grant funds will be used for administrative activities, including but not limited to, data collection and analysis, training, and consultation costs. The remainder of grant funds under Title VI, Part B will be used to purchase supported employment services under Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) for individuals with the most significant disabilities who have been determined eligible for supported employment. DSB will expend 50% or more of these funds on Youth with Disabilities

that need supported employment services. The State will provide a match of at least 10 percent in non-Federal expenditures for the total amount of expenditures incurred with half of the allotment reserved to provide SE services to youth with the most significant disabilities, our focus being blindness or severe visual impairment. DSB's electronic case management system provides the ability to ensure that Title VI-B funding is the primary source of payment for supported employment services until that funding is exhausted, at which point funding continues to be provided through Title I. DSB projects to provide supported employment services to 15 individuals during PY 2020. As explained above, when necessary both Title VI-B and Title I funds will be used for the provision of services. To successfully meet the supported employment needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities (blind or visually impaired), DSB continues to improve its relationships with the Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services for the provision of extended services for supported employment clients. DSB counselors and vocational staff from the above agencies work together to identify individuals who would be appropriate referrals to DSB for supported employment services. DSB works with the Department of Education, Special Education to assure that youth with the most significant disabilities are accessing career, transition and employment services including supported employment services. DSB has worked to ensure best practices, so that the needs of youth with the most significant disabilities are met.

DSB counsels with those in subminimum wage situations who are blind and visually impaired to provide information and access to vocational rehabilitation to achieve competitive integrated employment in the community. DSB works with the Department of Education, Special Education, along with the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Medical Services to identify those that are blind and visually impaired age 24 or younger, so that the following occurs prior to the individual seeking work paying subminimum wage (less than Federal minimum wage): 1) During team consultations it is documented and ensured that the individual has received Pre-ETS or transition services under IDEA. 2) The individual was given an opportunity to apply for VR services. Placement in subminimum wage situations are considered only after the individual has been found ineligible for services, or has been determined eligible for VR services but has not been successful and has been provided career counseling, information and referral to other appropriate resources for services designed to assist the individual in attaining competitive integrated employment.

## **2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:**

### **A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND**

DSB uses several vendors to provide comprehensive supported employment services to youth and adults identified as blind or visually impaired.

Half of the funds that DSB receives under the supported employment state grant will be used to support youth with the most significant blindness and low vision needs (up to age 24), and these youth may receive extended services (i.e., ongoing supports to maintain an individual in supported employment) for up to 4 years or until the youth turns 24, whichever occurs first.

DSB is developing an agreement with CRPs and Medicaid through the Division of Medical Services and with the Division of Development Disabilities to share the cost of extended services in supported employment.

### **B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.**

DSB is partnering with ARS to develop an agreement with CRPs and Medicaid through the Division of Medical Services and with the Division of Development Disabilities to increase resources for extended services and expand supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

## O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

### 1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

VR Strategies DSB has developed the following VR strategies to expand and improve services to its consumers for Program Years 2020-2021:

Goal 1: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: VR Counselors will schedule and attend face-to-face job exploration meetings to interview human resource professionals regarding the types of jobs they have, and the skills needed to do those jobs. Performance Measures: A minimum of two employer job exploration meetings will be scheduled per month for each client in job-readiness status. DSB will provide additional training on conducting outreach. The DSB Quality Assurance Unit will develop methods to track employer contacts in AWARE and Salesforce.

Strategy: VR Counselors will ensure that participants in job ready status are actively seeking employment. Performance Measures: VR Counselors will require three job contacts per week. Assist job-ready participants with registration at Workforce Services. Assist job-ready participants with registering and applying for careers available through the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP); and assist participants with registering and applying for jobs through employer internet accessible application processes with private, federal, state and non-profit employers. VR counselors will update employer information in the AWARE module and Quality Assurance staff will implement a more effective use of the employer module. DSB will utilize the Salesforce program for tracking employer services.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment. Performance Measures: Through the DSB Small Business Coordinator, participants will be provided access to Small Business Association trainings and the Arkansas Secretary of State's trainings on small business enterprises. The counselors will schedule job shadowing experiences with participants who are blind/visually impaired that have maintained successful businesses. Each self-employment proposal submitted by a participant will be reviewed by a team composed of the Field Services Administrator, the Small Business Coordinator, and the participant's VR Counselor to ensure that a proposal is realistic and sustainable before it is approved and any funds are provided. DSB will develop an updated brochure to provide interested consumers with information about DSB's small business self-employment program. DSB will revise their policy and procedures for funding small businesses. DSB will coordinate a small business team to review proposals and provide training for VR counselors on completing a small business proposal.

Strategy: DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants. Performance Measures: DSB will refer participants to apprenticeship programs across the state. DSB will refer participants to World Services for the Blind, Alpha Pointe, the Louisiana Center for the Blind, Sources, Goodwill, Adult Education, and other providers as necessary for additional skills training, including, but not limited to soft skills and work readiness training to assist participants in improving their probability of securing competitive employment. DSB will work with provider agencies to

develop more high demand training for more high demand jobs. DSB will ensure that appropriate guidelines are in place to monitor providers and training. DSB will refer participants to Apprenticeship programs.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI. Performance Measures: DSB will refer 100% of clients, adults, students and youth on SSI and SSDI to the DSB benefits counselor for a one-on-one benefits analysis. Area Managers will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors are referring 100% of SSI and SSDI VR participants to benefits counseling. Counselors will make participants aware of benefits counseling at the time of application, at the time of IPE's, and at the time of closure. New counselors will receive benefits counseling training and current counselors will receive benefits counseling updates.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and interested in employment to VR services. Performance Measures: DSB will refer 100% of Older Blind individuals who are interested in employment to VR services. VR counselors will make contact with agencies that serve older individuals such as Green Thumb, and AAA to seek referrals and to educate these agencies about DSB services.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers. Performance Measures: Each year each counselor will recognize one individual from his/her caseload as an area Consumer of the Year and nominate the individual as a candidate for the overall state Consumer of the Year. DSB will award area Consumers of the Year and their employers with trophies/framed certificates and related publicity.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment. Performance Measures: DSB will provide trainings to employers on the use and function of common assistive technology devices for the blind and visually impaired. DSB's assistive technology staff will develop trainings that can be modified for small and large employers. DSB will provide outreach and training to community organizations on technological advances in low vision and blindness. Provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of participants. DSB staff will continue to meet participants at Workforce Services offices, including DSB sponsored accessible kiosks, to assist participants in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning. Performance Measures: Novice counselors will attend a specific orientation to VR issues and participate in specialized immersion training during their first six months. Training through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association, Vision Quest, and other qualified sources. Novice counselors will be exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans. Novice counselors will attend Immersion training during their first six months. Counselors will attend specialized training with Louisiana Center for the Blind Mississippi State University and other training opportunities. DSB will utilize the UofA Currents and online training opportunities to provide staff with professional trainings.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in transition and job ready exploration to allow experienced participants to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced participants. Performance Measures: Peer mentoring will be used to connect

participants interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support. Area Consumers of the Year will be encouraged to provide peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs. Participants are connected to DSB Vendor Operators. A Peer Mentoring program will be developed for Pre-ETS students. Information will be provided on NFB and ACB organizations and utilize their members as mentors.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among the core partners of WIOA. Performance Measures: DSB staff will be active members of the Workforce Investment Boards and WIOA planning committees throughout the State. DSB Executive staff attend monthly WIOA Executive Roundtable meetings with all partners and serve on sub-committees to coordinate services. Staff attend bi-annual partner trainings. DSB executive staff will be active members of the State Workforce Investment Board and its committees.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings. Performance Measures: DSB will arrange for and accompany job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits. DSB will assist participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities. Counselors will connect participants to campus tours, assist students with FAFSA and college applications. Counselors will assist students with campus acclimation and introduce them to campus disability services.

Goal 2: Increase Pre-Employment Transition Services to high school students; increase transition services to out-of-school youth.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all Pre-ETS students and youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities. Performance Measures: DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for Pre-ETS students to explore potential career opportunities. DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for Pre-ETS students. DSB will arrange for informational interviews for Pre-ETS students to explore job opportunities. DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for Pre-ETS students to explore career fields. DSB will accompany Pre-ETS students to career seminars and career fairs. DSB will arrange for and accompany Pre-ETS students to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits. DSB will work with more vendors and businesses around the state to develop work experience, job shadowing, informational interviews, and career exploration opportunities. Pre-ETS counselors will explore career options with students and set up work experience and volunteer opportunities for students to gain “real experiences”. DSB will provide a three-weeks “Jump Start” program in which students will hear from company representatives, explore careers and gain work experience. Pre-ETS students will participate in job shadowing opportunities and informational interviews. DSB will conduct transition fairs and accompany students to other transition/career fairs.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations. Performance Measures: DSB will sponsor or participate in at least one training or event that will bring together transition partners for the purpose of exchanging information that will specifically benefit students who are blind or severely visually impaired. DSB will conduct local transition summits with school districts across the state. DSB will participate in trainings with our core partners, Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), Arkansas Career Education (ACE) and Career and

Technical Education (CTE). DSB will coordinate a training with the Arkansas School for the Blind and Vision Impaired (ASBVI) project.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed.

Performance Measures: Counselors will coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of transition students. The Pre-ETS Manager will review the database to ensure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants who input the local information and update the list monthly. Pre-ETS counselors will contact LEA Area Supervisors and have face to face meetings with school staff. Referrals identified by LEAs are sent to Pre-ETS counselors and the Pre-ETS Manager for review. Monthly reports of school contacts will be provided to the Pre-ETS Manager.

Strategy: Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to ensure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school. Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor this during case reviews to ensure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE. Pre-ETS counselors will develop and update IPEs of transition students before they graduate. Pre-ETS Counselors will facilitate a meeting with high school staff and college disability services for those attending college. The Pre-ETS manager will review and monitor the cases to ensure the IPEs are completed.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings. Performance Measures: Annually, DSB will invite ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to a Parent Summit with VR Counselors to provide information about assistive technology; rights and responsibilities; available resources and services; benefits counseling; and funding for college and career start—up costs. DSB will conduct an annual Back to School Parents Summit and parent summits in local areas.

Strategy: DSB will continue to provide assessments and services to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self—advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, benefits counseling, and rights and responsibilities as an informed participant. Performance Measures: Formal evaluations for assistive technology will be performed by Tech Lab staff in accordance with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering. Counselors will arrange for training for Pre-ETS students and youth to acquire independent living skills and technological skills in order for them to participate in career exploration services. Pre-ETS counselors arrange trainings in independent living skills and assistive technology for students and youth. DSB will consult with additional vendors to provide independent living and technology training. Pre-ETS counselors will refer students for appropriate trainings. The DSB Tech Lab will provide assistive technology trainings. DSB will provide assistive technology through its Assistive Technology Loaner Program.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Performance Measures: DSB will present at school assemblies, parent—teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on Pre-ETS and how to access these services. DSB will establish an information clearinghouse and schedule demonstration labs on selected high school campuses to inform parents, students, and education professionals of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them. DSB will continue its system of mail outs and emails to public schools. DSB will continue efforts to reach private, home, and accredited virtual schools. Pre-ETS counselors will have face to face meetings with the schools.



Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). Performance Measures: DSB will continue its system of mailouts and emails twice a year to area ESVI representatives. In addition to the local networking efforts, the Pre-ETS Manager will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB. DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB. Pre-ETS staff will meet with the ESVI team as a group to strengthen our working relationship. Pre-ETS counselors and ESVI consultants will refer students to each other's agency for appropriate services. Pre-ETS Manager will provide an updated list of students to the counselors. Pre-ETS staff will attend the annual AER conference.

Goal 3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB will expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area. Performance Measures: DSB will formulate an alliance with non-profit organizations established in the Delta region, to provide economic literacy and soft skills trainings to individuals living in poverty in the Delta region of the State of Arkansas. DSB will coordinate meetings with non-profits and agencies that are established in the Delta region, to provide information and trainings to individuals living in the Delta region of the state.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability. Performance Measures: Each VR Counselor will staff at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory. Staff will increase participation at job fairs and health fairs.

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith—based groups. Performance Measures: DSB will establish a cooperative agreement with the Urban League in Little Rock and Springdale to reach the underserved and unserved populations. VR Counselors will make at least four faith—based outreach efforts in each of their geographic areas annually. VR Counselors will make at least two minority outreach efforts to Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of their geographic areas annually. DSB will develop a new Faith-Based Outreach program. DSB will provide outreach training for their counselors and staff.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well. Performance Measures: DSB will continue to send supervisors/administrators to these conferences to interact with participants and they will make presentations as requested. DSB staff will attend the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and the American Council for the Blind (ACB) state and national conferences. DSB will participate with other state conferences of blindness and visual impairment organizations to network on issues faced by other states and gain ideas about how to better serve individuals.

Goal 4: DSB will increase coordination with employers.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities and work experience in their chosen career field at the job site. Performance Measures: DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for job ready adult participants to explore potential career opportunities. DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for job ready adult participants. DSB will arrange for informational interviews for job ready adult participants to explore job opportunities. DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for job ready adult participants to explore career fields. DSB will accompany job ready adult participants to career seminars and career fairs.

Strategy: DSB will become Chamber of Commerce members. Performance Measures: VR counselors will make contact with at least two Chamber members per month to learn about the trends and needs of those businesses. Each Counselor will obtain an updated Chamber list for their area. Each DSB office will join their local Chamber of Commerce. VR counselors and the Business Engagement Coordinator will contact chamber businesses. DSB staff will attend Chamber of Commerce events.

Strategy: VR Counselors will conduct public speaking engagements. Performance Measure: At least one presentation per year will be given to the local area Lions, Rotary, Civitan, or Kiwanis Club in order to form relationships with local leaders by DSB counselors. Counselors will conduct COY presentations at local civic community clubs.

Strategy: DSB management staff will connect with employers in each economic development district. Performance Measure: DSB management staff will establish at least one ongoing internship site per region for DSB participants. DSB management staff will work in conjunction with the Arkansas Apprenticeship program to locate apprenticeship opportunities for participants. DSB Business Engagement Coordinator will connect with employers in each economic development district and will develop internships and apprenticeship opportunities for participants.

Supported Employment Goals and Strategies:

Goal 1: DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with organizations such as World Services for the Blind, Job Connections, AEDD Inc., Easter Seals and Goodwill to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues. DSB will join ARS to conduct at least one meeting with providers to discuss ways to increase SE services to rural areas.

Goal 2: DSB will increase Supported Employment services to Pre-ETS students and out-of-school youth.

Strategy: Counselors will determine whether students or youth are candidates for SE services during the employment planning process. Performance Measures: DSB will train new staff and provide updates to veteran staff on identifying and providing SE services to Pre-ETS transition youth. Staff trainings on Supported Employment and Customized Employment will be conducted.

Goal 3: DSB will increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants. Performance Measure: At least one presentation or training will be made to educate SE providers about vendor standards. DSB will provide training for SE providers on blindness and vision impairments.

## 2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS

A broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired as appropriate at each stage of the rehabilitation process

in accordance with the individual's employment goal and IPE. The provision of assistive technology services and devices is based upon assessments and recommendations by the DSB Technology Unit, availability of funds, and the participant's IPE.

**3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM**

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment completed in December 2019 for PY 2020 indicated that those requiring long-term support to maintain employment and those in rural communities were the most underserved populations. Overall job services and transportation were listed as the greatest barriers to employment for the underserved populations. In an effort to reach more communities DSB will continue to use a variety of outreach methods, such as exhibit booths, to educate the public about DSB services and their availability. Additionally, DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith—based groups. DSB will establish an agreement with organizations in the Delta Region to reach the most impoverished citizens of Arkansas. DSB will also enter into an agreement with the Urban League to reach minority populations and those unserved and underserved in the inner city areas of Little Rock and Northwest Arkansas. Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

**4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)**

DSB works in conjunction with the Arkansas Education Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI) and the Department of Education, Special Education Division to identify blind and visually impaired students. Most recently, DSB has expanded its outreach effort to include private schools, alternative schools, and accredited online high school systems. DSB is improving and expanding efforts by offering seminars and in person talks to these educational organizations to inform teachers, parents, and students of the services that are available. DSB offers Parent Summits to provide coordinated efforts to allow students and parents to learn about the options in blindness skills training, education, and employment services. DSB continues to provide a three-week transition learning experience for up to 30 students from across the state, which includes paid work experiences, lessons in self-advocacy, peer mentoring, financial literacy, independent living skills, career counseling, and planning for the future; the students are housed at Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and go home on weekends. DSB intends to expand this program throughout the State to offer students and youth an opportunity to receive services closer to the communities in which they live.

DSB is also working to offer work experience training, soft skills training, career counseling, and advocacy skills to pre—employment transition students throughout the State. DSB counselors use the Pre-ETS Counselor Guidebook to help prepare students for employment. This guidebook breaks down types of activities and skills related to each of the 5 core services to assist counselors in identifying needs and activities for students. DSB works regularly with Superior Success, and Challenge Solutions to provide trainings and work-based learning opportunities for students. DSB continues to work to identify new vendors to provide additional opportunities for students. DSB is currently working with ASBVI to develop an additional program for students to learn workplace readiness skills during the school year. Working with our Pre-ETS

vendors, DSB has been able to offer both in person and distance learning opportunities for students around the state.

**5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE**

DSB does not have any plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the state.

**6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA**

DSB has continued to track and maintain an internal analysis of the WIOA performance measures. DSB uses annual reports, monthly reports, and the required federal reports to track and evaluate its performance throughout the program year. Using the ETA 9169 for PY17 and PY18, DSB was able to track the state performance on Measurable Skill Gains and work with ARS to develop a joint expected level for PY20 of 24% and PY21 of 25% for the state. This level came from averaging the state results for PY17 and PY18. DSB continues to track the employment rates for the program years to determine if they are improving and to measure the effectiveness of DSB's strategies.

DSB will use the data gathered from its internal and federal reports to monitor progress towards the PY performance measures. These results will be used to improve the employment outcomes of individuals with blindness and visual impairment in Arkansas. Specifically, DSB will strive to increase the number of individuals who are employed and the wages of those individuals through labor market analysis, targeted counseling on job market areas and the availability of career tracks using Arkansas Labor Market statistics to help individuals make choices that will increase their employability and earning potential. DSB tracks the employment rate for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit using the data submitted in the RSA 911. This data is also used to track the Retention with the Same Employer measure for DSB. The data for these measures is used to evaluate the effectiveness of DSB's implementation of the WIOA standards each PY and to continue to improve the results for DSB each PY. DSB is committed to monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the six WIOA-required performance measures. DSB will continue to provide training to all DSB staff on the common measures and improve relationships with organizations in the Delta Region to reach the un-served and underserved minority populations in Southeast and South Arkansas. DSB staff will attend Chamber of Commerce events, Lions Club International events, and provide outreach to local area businesses to demonstrate the capabilities and successes of blind and visually impaired Arkansans to enhance relationships and employer willingness to provide on-the-job trainings, apprenticeships, internships, volunteer opportunities, and job shadowing for those we serve. The business and technology section will host "technology talk" seminars and provide demonstrations on college campuses. This activity increases awareness, acceptance, and opens doors for employment opportunities. A Case Review team has been developed to conduct regular independent reviews of case files to offer advice and best practices on service provisions using the new Quality Assurance Tool in the AWARE case management system. At this time DSB has also hired a case auditor to conduct monthly case file audits on all caseloads to improve quality and accuracy in case files. DSB has begun to discuss topics related to vision loss on the radio and on local television news programs. DSB has increased the number of certified rehabilitation counselors in the last year. DSB will continue to seek out certified rehabilitation counselors and provide skills enhancement opportunities to the current staff. DSB is working closely with World Services for the Blind to provide employment training tracks for our clients that result in careers.

## 7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

DSB has cooperative agreements with local Workforce Investment Boards, which are updated as necessary. DSB also has cooperative agreements with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (a general agreement and a deafblind agreement). DSB, ARS, the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS), and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Special Education Unit (SEU), Transition Unit are partners in a cooperative agreement outlining responsibilities and the provision of services, including supported employment, to transition—aged participants.

The DSB Director serves on the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, which meets quarterly, and VR Counselors are members of the local Workforce Investment Boards, which meet quarterly across the state.

DSB counselors and support staff are now located in local Workforce Services' offices. Our technology lab staff are also located in the Little Rock office. Executive and administrative staff have moved to the Department of Commerce building with ARS, and Career Education partners.

DSB continues to support its 17 accessible kiosks for participants at Workforce Center locations. The original 10 kiosks were placed in the same cities where DSB has offices; the second set of seven kiosks were placed in cities with either two—year or four—year Institutions of Higher Education. The kiosks provide participants the same access to the Internet to search for jobs as a sighted person seeking services from Workforce.

## 8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

### A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

DSB and the DSB Board jointly developed the goals, priorities, and strategies based on input provided by the Comprehensive Needs Assessment conducted in December 2019 for PY 2020 and input from key stakeholders. DSB's strategic plan is designed to provide participants with more access to those services the needs assessment identified as essential. Essential services were identified as job development and placement, employment preparation, on the job training, and soft skills development. The strategies are intended to position DSB to successfully meet WIOA performance requirements, to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided to agency clients including those who are unserved or underserved, and to create opportunities to enhance relationships with employers, community organizations, and WIOA partners while addressing the concerns identified during the Comprehensive Needs Assessment conducted in December 2019.

### B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

DSB uses innovation and expansion funding to support the funding of our Statewide Independent Living Council. DSB has obtained a license for Salesforce to enhance the ability of DSB to coordinate business engagement efforts with partner agencies DSB will continue to provide funding to support technology updates within the NFB Newline application provided to all Arkansans. Counseling labs that are school based locations have been coordinated with the School for the Blind to provide pre-employment transition core services during the school day to groups of students.

C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

DSB recognizes the importance of providing equitable access and the opportunity to fully participate to individuals with disabilities. Based on the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DSB's efforts to reduce the limitations placed on participants in regards to technology and transportation have made an impact in allowing consumers to participate in VR services. The most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment indicated that Job Services, including Job Placement, were the most significant need of our consumers. DSB will continue to work with providers both in Arkansas and in neighboring states to offer more opportunities for direct job placement. DSB continues to work with partner agencies to locate more opportunities for job placement as well as to expand outreach to employers through our efforts with Business Engagement. Additionally, DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants. DSB refers participants to World Services for the Blind, Alpha Pointe, Louisiana Center for the Blind, Sources, Goodwill, Adult Education and other providers as necessary for additional skills training, including but not limited to soft skills, and work readiness training to assist participants in improving their probability of securing competitive employment. DSB is continuing to work on strategies to improve those relationships and partnerships to ensure that more participants benefit from the services necessary to meet their need when it comes to employment preparation and soft skills development.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

Goal 1: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: VR Counselors scheduled and attended face to face job exploration meetings to interview human resources professionals regarding the types of jobs they have and the skills needed to do these jobs.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- Each counselor scheduled a minimum of two employer job exploration meetings per month.
- Staff attended Business Expos with Chamber of Commerce and exhibited at other events.
- DSB coordinated and shared information with ARS Business Relations staff.

Strategy: VR Counselors will ensure that participants in job ready status are actively seeking employment.

Evaluation of Progress PY 18-19:

- Counselors required 3 job contacts per week for each job-ready status participants.
- Counselors are referring clients to Workforce, and TAP.

- Counselors are assisting participants to register and apply for jobs on employer internet accessible application processes with private, federal, state, and non-profit employers.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment.

Evaluation of Progress PY 18-19:

- Counselors provided participants with trainings on small business enterprises.
- Counselors scheduled job shadowing experiences with participants who are blind/visually impaired that have maintained successful businesses.

Strategy: DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- DSB refers participants to World Services for the Blind, Alpha Pointe, Louisiana Center for the Blind, Sources, Goodwill, Adult Education, and other providers as necessary for additional skills training, including but not limited to soft skills, and work readiness training to assist participants in improving their probability of securing competitive integrated employment.
- DSB refers participants to Apprenticeship programs.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- DSB refers 100% of clients, adults, students, and youth on SSI and SSDI to benefits counseling for a one-on-one benefits analysis.
- Counselors provide benefits counseling at the time of application, at the time of IPE's, and at the time of closure.

Strategy: DSB will refer Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and interested in employment to VR services.

Evaluation of Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB counselors refer OIB participants that are interested in employment to VR services.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- Individuals are recognized as area and state Consumer of the Year along with their employers.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- DSB provides trainings to employers on the use and function of common assistive technology devices for the blind and visually impaired.

- DSB continues to provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur in order to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of participants. DSB's Counselors are now located in 11 Workforce Services offices.
- DSB staff continue to meet participants at Workforce Services offices, including DSB sponsored accessible kiosks, in order to assist participants in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting.
- The Pre-ETS program has set up a Technology Closet so that students can try out technology before purchasing equipment.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- Novice counselors attended a specific orientation to VR issues and participated in specialized training through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association or other qualified sources.
- Counselors were exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in transition and job ready exploration to allow experienced participants to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced participants.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- Peer mentoring is used to connect participants interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support.
- Area Consumers of the Year provided peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs.
- Peer mentoring was provided by NFB and ACB members
- Peer mentoring was provided to our Pre-ETS participants during Jump Start and other activities.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among the core partners of WIOA.

Evaluation and Progress PY-18-19:

- DSB staff were active participants on the local Workforce Investment Boards throughout the state.
- DSB Executive staff were active members with the State Workforce Investment Board and participated on committees.
- DSB Executive Staff served on WIOA Executive Roundtable and committees.
- DSB staff attend WIOA Partners semi-annual trainings.



Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB counselors arranged for and accompanied job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits.
- Counselors assisted participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities.

Goal 2: Increase Pre-ETS to high school students; increase transition services to out-of-school youth.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all Pre-ETS students and transition youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB arranged for tours of local businesses for Pre-ETS students to explore potential career opportunities.
- Counselors arranged job shadowing, volunteer opportunities, and informational interviews for Pre-ETS students to explore job opportunities.
- DSB counselors arranged and accompanied students on college, vocational/technical and university campus visits.
- DSB provided a successful three-weeks Jump Start program in which students heard from business representatives, explored careers and gained work experience.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB Pre-ETS staff attended the state AER conferences
- DSB Pre-ETS staff were active participants with the state Transition Summit with representatives of the school districts
- DSB Counselors participated in Deaf-Blind Train the Trainer training with ARS, CAYSI, and Goodwill.
- DSB staff hosted and attended transition fairs statewide.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- Counselors and Rehabilitation Assistants coordinated with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors maintained lists of transition students.
- Pre-ETS Manager reviewed the database to ensure it was properly maintained.
- Referrals from the LEA's were reviewed and sent to appropriate Pre-ETS counselor.

Strategy: VR Counselors continue to track transition students on their caseloads to ensure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school.

#### Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- Pre-ETS counselors developed and updated IPE's of transition students before they graduated.
- DSB Managers conducted case reviews to ensure that no transition student graduates without an IPE.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

#### Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- Annually, DSB invites ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to a Parent Summit with VR Counselors to provide information about assistive technology; rights and responsibilities; available resources and services; benefits counseling; and funding for college and career start-up costs.
- DSB counselors conducted Transition Summits in local areas across the state.

Strategy: DSB continue to provide assessments and services to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self-advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, benefits counseling, and rights and responsibilities as an informed participant.

#### Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB Counselors arranged trainings for Pre-ETS students and youth to acquire independent living skills and technological skills for them to participate in career exploration services.
- DSB has established an Assistive Technology Loaner program for Pre-ETS students so that they can try out the equipment before purchasing.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

#### Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB staff presented at school assemblies, parent-teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on Pre-ETS and how to access these services.
- DSB conducted face-to-face meetings with the school staff.
- DSB has established an information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstrations on selected high school campuses to inform parents, students, and education professionals of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them.
- DSB continued its system of mail-outs and e-mails to public schools.
- DSB continue their outreach to reach private, home, and accredited virtual schools.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI).

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB continued its system of mail-outs and e-mails twice a year to area ESVI representatives.
- In addition to the local networking efforts, the Pre-ETS Manager networked with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB.
- DSB referred participants under age 14 to ESVI and encouraged referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.
- Staff attended the annual AER conference.

Goal 3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB continue to expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB conducted outreach with organizations established in the Delta region, to provide economic literacy and soft skills trainings to individuals living in poverty in the Delta region of the State of Arkansas.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB Counselors and staff exhibited at widely attended or significantly relevant events in his/her territory to include health fairs, conferences, summits, and the Arkansas state fair.

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith-based groups.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB contracted with the state Independent Living Centers to conduct outreach to minorities and faith-based groups.
- These centers conducted at least 3 contacts a month with minorities and faith-based groups.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB staff and consumers attended both the NFB and ACB state and national conferences to interact with participants and they will make presentations as requested.
- DSB staff made presentations at the state NFB and ACB conferences.

Goal 4: DSB will increase coordination with employers.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities and work experience in their chosen career field at the job site.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB arranged tours of local businesses for job ready adult participants to explore potential career opportunities.
- DSB arranged job shadowing opportunities and informational interviews for job ready adult participants to explore job opportunities.
- Volunteer opportunities were arranged for job ready adult participants to explore career fields.
- DSB staff accompanied job ready adult participants to career seminars and career fairs.

Strategy: VR Counselors will become Chamber of Commerce members.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB renewed their membership with local Chamber of Commerce organizations across the state.
- VR counselors contacted business members to explore human resources trends and needs.

Strategy: VR Counselors will conduct public speaking engagements.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB Counselors conducted at least one presentation per year in their local area Lions, Rotary, Civitan, or Kiwanis Club in order to form relationships with local leaders.

Strategy: DSB management staff connect with employers in each economic development district.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB staff conducted outreach with employers in each economic development district.

Supported Employment Goals:

Goal 1: DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with organizations such as World Services for the Blind, Job Connections, AEDD Inc., Easter Seals and Goodwill to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB collaborated with organizations such as World Services for the Blind, Job Connections, AEDD Inc., Easter Seals, Ed Davis Inc. and Goodwill to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues.

- DSB added new providers TEEM and Building Bridges that serves the southern region of the state to include the rural areas.

**Goal 2:** DSB will increase Supported Employment services to transition students and out-of-school youth.

**Strategy:** Counselors will determine whether students or youth are candidates for SE during the employment planning process.

**Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:**

- The Pre-ETS counselors identify youth who might be appropriate for SE and refer them to providers for services.
- DSB trains new staff and provides updates to veteran staff on identifying and providing SE to youth who may be appropriate for supported employment and how to refer them to providers.

**Goal 3:** DSB will increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

**Strategy:** DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants.

**Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:**

- DSB partners with ARS to provide information and training to SE providers.

## B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The largest factors that impedes the achievement of the VR goals and priorities are staff turnover among DSB's field staff. We have consistently had an average of 8 vacancies among the counselors and support staff during the last year. As a result of an internal audit of our provision of Pre-ETS services, we discovered the need to develop and implement new policies and procedures. We were fortunate to work with WINTAC during this process. As a result, the staff received additional training and new process was implemented in January 2020.

### 2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

#### A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

DSB continued to enlist new SE providers that provide services to the blind and visionally impaired, to include TEEM and Building Bridges that serve the rural and under served population.

DSB's Field Administrator serves on the state APSE Board and works with other APSE members to enhance supported employment opportunities across the state. DSB staff serve on the conference committee, and the next statewide conference will be March, 2020.

DSB has been able to refer youth up to age 24 to supported employment services. Students that enroll in our Jump Start program explore different career options and some of these individuals are referred to community rehabilitation providers for services.

A new vendor application and monitoring forms were developed for the community rehabilitation providers and training was provided.

DSB encouraged participants' family members and other natural support individuals to become SE providers.

DSB works with ARS and providers to provide training for the SE providers.

#### B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The largest factor that impedes the achievement of the supported employment goal is the lack of statewide community rehabilitation programs offering supported employment to the blind and visually impaired. DSB has enlisted some new providers, including TEEM and Building Bridges to serve the Delta (under served) rural area. DSB has a low number of consumers with most significant disabilities that need supported employment services in order to obtain and retain employment.

#### 3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

DSB continues to work on improving understanding and accuracy of its reporting and measuring of the performance accountability measures for Section 116 of WIOA. Using the data reported on the RSA 911 and ETA 9169, DSB has worked to stay informed about our performance measures to develop guidance on our expected levels of performance. Using the ETA 9169 for PY17 and PY18, DSB met with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to determine an expected Measurable Skill Gains Rate for the state. In PY17, Arkansas achieved 22.7% Measurable Skill Gains, and in PY18 we achieved 25.2%. Both agencies have been working to improve accuracy in documenting our measurable skill gains and intend to continue to do so moving forward. DSB and ARS averaged the 2 previous year's performance to obtain the rate of 23.9%. Therefore, the agencies mutually agreed that a suggested target of 24% for PY 2020 and 25% for PY 2021 gave us confidence in our ability to achieve the rate and continue to improve accuracy for Program Years 2020 and 2021.

Based on the data reported in the RSA 911, DSB continues to monitor and track performance measures related to WIOA. In Program Year 18, DSB reported 131 participants (33%) to be employed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit, 65 Participants (18.4%) to be employed in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit, and 46 participants (35%) to have retained employment with the same employer in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit. DSB continues to track the data for PY 19 as there is a delay in wage quarter reporting. As a state Arkansas reported a median 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter earnings of \$5240.93, while DSB reported \$6,623.43 as an agency. DSB continues to work on improving its measures and working with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to ensure consistency, accuracy, and growth in our performance measures for Program Years 2020 and 2021.

#### 4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

DSB used innovation and expansion funding to support the funding of our Statewide Independent Living Council. DSB has obtained a license for Salesforce to enhance the ability of DSB to coordinate business engagement efforts with partner agencies. DSB will continue to provide funding to support technology updates within the NFB Newsline application provided to all Arkansans, including now being able to live stream the service. Counseling labs that are school based locations have been coordinated with the School for the Blind to provide pre-employment transition core services during the school day to groups of students.

## Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

### 1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

DSB remains committed to increasing the quality, scope and extent of Supported Employment Services to eligible consumers. During PY 2018, DSB used vendors to provide comprehensive supported employment services to youth and adults identified as blind or visually impaired.

Supported employment services are based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual as specified in the individualized plan for employment (IPE), and are provided by the VR agency for a period of not more than 24 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the rehabilitation counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE. Prior to job placement in supported employment, individuals with the most significant disabilities receive VR services identified in the IPE, and which the VR counselor and the individual have determined will lead to achievement of the supported employment outcome. Supported employment services, also identified on the IPE, begin at the time of the individual's job placement. Ongoing services are furnished by the VR agency, using funds under the Supported Employment program and/or the VR program, from the time of job placement until the transition to extended services, and thereafter by one or more extended services providers, including the VR agency, in accordance with 34 CFR §363.4(a)(2), throughout the individual's term of employment in a particular job placement.

During PY2018, DSB increased the number of individuals who received supported employment services by increasing the number of providers. Some of our providers include: Goodwill, World Services for the Blind, Sources, Arkansas Support Network, Building Bridges, Ed Davis Inc. Easter Seals, and S.W. Chance.

DSB participated with trainings in which DOL ODEP Subject Matter Experts provided on supported employment with providers. These trainings also included state leaders in a planning session in which our Director and Field Administrator attended.

DSB continued to utilize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas Department of Education-Special Education Unit, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Division of Adult Services and Behavior Health Services. This MOU defines each agency's roles and responsibilities toward competitive integrated employment for individuals with most significant disabilities. This partnership also supports on-going Employment First activities for the state.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, provides training Supported Employment providers, along with certification of Job Coaches. DSB supports these trainings rather than duplicating.

DSB are members of Arkansas APSE and the Field Administrator serves on the Board of Directors. We supported the bi-annual statewide APSE conference.

### 2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

Ongoing services are furnished by the VR agency, using funds under the Supported Employment program and/or the VR program, from the time of job placement until the transition to extended services, and thereafter by one or more extended services providers, including the VR agency, throughout the individual's term of employment in a particular job placement. In addition, funds allotted under the Supported Employment program or the VR program may be

used to provide extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities as authorized under section 604(b)(2) of the Act. However, extended services may not be provided by the VR agency using funds allotted under either the Supported Employment program or the VR program to an individual who is not a youth with a disability. DSB provides extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities for a period of time not to exceed four years, or until a youth reaches the age of 25 and is no longer considered a "youth with a disability," whichever occurs first.

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND) CERTIFICATIONS

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Division of Services for the Blind

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[17], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[18], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER SECTION 111 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Divisions of Services for the Blind

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[19], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND/OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.



6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Cassondra Williams-Stokes

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

DSB Director

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

#### FOOTNOTES

#### CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Division of Services for the Blind
Name of Signatory	Cassondra Williams-Stokes
Title of Signatory	Director
Date Signed	[2/28/2020]

#### ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of	

The State Plan must include	Include
the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	Yes
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	No
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	No
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative	

The State Plan must include	Include
approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	
3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	Yes
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.i. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	

The State Plan must include	Include
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an	

The State Plan must include	Include
appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	baseline	baseline	baseline	baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	baseline	baseline	baseline	baseline
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	baseline	baseline	baseline	baseline
Credential Attainment Rate	baseline	baseline	baseline	baseline
Measurable Skill Gains	24.0%	24.0%	24.0%	25.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.*

#### VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

##### TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

A. CONDUCT A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO SERVE ALL POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS IN THE STATE (NOT NECESSARILY IN A UNIFORM MANNER) THAT PROVIDES ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES WITH (OR EXPECTING) CHILDREN AND PROVIDES PARENTS WITH JOB PREPARATION, WORK, AND SUPPORT SERVICES TO ENABLE THEM TO LEAVE THE PROGRAM, SPECIFICALLY CASH ASSISTANCE, AND BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(I) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

Arkansas operates a TANF Block Grant assistance program on a statewide basis in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws and policies. This statewide program has been fully articulated in previously-approved TANF State Plans by the Administration for Children and Families.

The Division of Workforce Services and the Department of Human Services - Division of County Operations work collaboratively in making the TANF Program services available in each of Arkansas’s seventy-five (75) counties.

## **POPULATIONS TO BE SERVED**

Transitional Employment Assistance will be available to economically needy families with children under the age of eighteen (18) years who are residing in the State of Arkansas and meet specified eligibility requirements.

Families receiving cash assistance must meet all of the following eligibility criteria.

### **Definition of Needy Family**

A needy family is defined as one which includes a child or children under the age of 18 years and the parent(s) or other adult relative caretaker who is living with such child(ren) and whose family income and resources are within specified limits.

### **Definition of Other Adult Relative Caretaker**

Other adult relative caretaker is defined as a non-parent relative who is providing care for the child (when there is no natural parent in the home) and is in one of the following degrees of relationship to the child:

- a. A blood or adoptive relative within the fifth degree of kinship (e.g., grandparent, aunt, etc.);
- b. Step-father, step-mother, step-sister, step-brother;
- c. A spouse of any of the above.

For purposes of determining family size and family income and resource eligibility, any other adult relative caretaker as defined above, with the exception of a step-parent, may choose to be included as an eligible family member or not.

If such relative chooses not to be included (i.e., is a payee only), then his/her income and resources will not be considered when determining eligibility. In addition, employment services described in Section 4 will not be available to such excluded adult relative and the time limit described in Section 3.6 will not apply.

### **Income Limit**

#### **Cash Assistance**

The family's countable income (as defined in the State's policy and procedures manual) must be equal to or below \$223 per month. The one income limit applies to all family sizes and to initial and on-going eligibility. This amount is 25% of what a full-time (40 hours/week) worker would have earned at the federal minimum wage that was effective September 1, 1997 (\$5.15/hour) in a month.

For the purposes of income eligibility, the following deductions will be made from a family's gross monthly-earned income:

- a. For initial eligibility, a 20% deduction for work related expenses (e.g., taxes).
- b. For on-going eligibility, the 20% work-related deduction followed by a 60% work incentive deduction from the remainder.

### **Resource Limit**

#### **Cash Assistance**

The family's countable resources must be equal to or below \$3,000. The one resource limit applies to all family sizes and to initial and on-going eligibility.

Resources include real and personal property which are currently available or for which the family has the legal ability to make available for current use.

In accordance with Arkansas Act 514 of 2007, the following categories of resources are disregarded:

- (a) The family's homestead;
- (b) One operable motor vehicle;
- (c) Household and personal goods;
- (d) Income-producing property;
- (e) Monies deposited in an approved Individual Development Account (IDA) or approved escrow account for business or career development;
- (f) Any other property specified in the State policy and procedures manual that the agency had determined would be cost-efficient to exclude or which must be excluded due to federal or state statute.

### **Citizenship Requirement**

Recipients must be citizens, qualified aliens who entered the United States before August 22, 1996, qualified aliens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 who are excepted from the five-year bar, or aliens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 and have been in "qualified alien" status for at least five (5) years.

### **Time Limit Requirement**

A needy family who meets all other eligibility requirements will not be eligible to receive TEA assistance if the family includes an adult parent (or other adult relative caretaker who is included as an eligible member) who has received such assistance for twenty-four (24) months unless it is determined that the family meets one of the criteria outlined in Section 5 (Exemptions/Deferrals). The twenty-four months need not be consecutive months. The twenty-four (24) month count began July 1, 1998.

A needy family that includes an adult parent who meets the criteria outlined in Section 5 (Exemptions/Deferrals) and is deferred from the twenty-four (24) month time limit will not be eligible to receive TEA assistance beyond the sixty (60) month federal time limit unless it is determined that the family meets one of the criteria outlined in Section 5 (Hardship Extensions).

### **Personal Responsibility Agreement Requirement**

The Personal Responsibility Agreement (PRA) is an agreement between the department and recipient specifying the recipient's responsibilities that are a condition of receiving employment assistance, which may include an employment plan that describes what the recipient and the department will do to assist the recipient to achieve self-sufficiency through employment. (See Section 8.1 for a description of the PRA.)

### **Drug Screening and Drug Testing**

Drug screening of all TEA and Work Pays applicants and current recipients that are otherwise eligible shall be conducted. During their respective eligibility determination or redetermination, the drug screening will be used to determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe the applicant or current recipient engages in the use of drugs. The TEA and Works Pays drug screening and testing program is separate from any employer-required drug screening and/or drug testing. Drug testing information shall be kept confidential.

### **Drug Screening**

Applicants and recipients that are otherwise eligible shall submit a completed drug screening questionnaire as a part of the eligibility determination or redetermination for TEA and Work Pays benefits. Refusal and/or failure, without good cause, to submit a completed drug screening questionnaire shall result in denial of the application or ineligibility of recipient.

If the result of the drug screening indicates a reasonable suspicion to believe that the applicant or recipient has engaged in the use of drugs, then the applicant or recipient shall be required to take a drug test.

### **Exemption from Drug Screening and Testing Requirements**

The following are exempt from the drug screening and testing requirement:

A dependent child under eighteen (18) years of age unless the dependent child is a parent who is also an applicant for the TEA and Work Pays Programs and who does not live with a parent, legal guardian, or other adult caretaker relative.

An entity or individual participating in the Career Pathways Program or Community Investment Initiative under the TEA and Work Pays Programs.

### **Drug Testing and Treatment**

If the applicant or recipient that is otherwise eligible tests positive for drugs, the drug testing entity will administer a confirmation test using the same specimen sample from the initial positive test. The results of the confirmation test will determine whether the program refers the applicant or recipient for a substance abuse evaluation and treatment. The applicant or recipient will be able to present a prescription for any medication or a written certification and a registry identification card issued under Arkansas Constitution, Amendment 98, she/he is taking to the drug testing entity for review in conjunction with any positive test results.

### **Disqualification Related to Drug Testing and Treatment Requirements**

A refusal to take a drug test shall result in the applicant's or recipient's ineligibility for TEA and Work Pays benefits for six (6) months.

If the applicant that is otherwise eligible complies with drug testing and/or treatment requirements, the applicant may be eligible for TEA and Work Pays benefits. The applicant or recipient complying with the substance abuse evaluation and treatment/recovery plan may continue to receive benefits for duration of the program treatment not to exceed six (6) months.

After the six (6) months of treatment or disqualification, the applicant or recipient that is otherwise eligible will be re-tested. If the applicant or recipient tests positive for drugs in a subsequent drug test, validated by a confirmation test, the applicant or recipient that is otherwise eligible shall be ineligible to receive TEA and Work Pays benefits for six (6) months from the date of the positive confirmation test.

### **Designating a Protective Payee**



If an applicant or recipient that is otherwise eligible and is found ineligible to receive TEA and Work Pays benefits as a result of a positive drug test or failure to begin, participate in, and/or complete the drug treatment/recovery support resource program, that applicant or recipient shall not be eligible for benefits and removed from the benefit unit. However, the dependent child's eligibility for TEA and Work Pays benefits shall not be affected.

ADWS or authorized agency shall designate a protective payee, either a caretaker relative or legal guardian of the child, to receive the dependent child's TEA benefits. No person who is the applicant for or recipient that is otherwise eligible for TEA and Work Pays benefits and tests positive for the use of drugs shall serve as a protective payee.

### **Appeal Drug Screening and Drug Testing**

An applicant or recipient that is otherwise eligible may appeal any denial of eligibility for TEA and Work Pays benefits as a result of drug screening or drug testing in accordance with appeal procedures in the TEA Policy manual.

### **Assignment of Child Support**

The adult caretaker must agree to assign child support rights to the State. Such assignment will become effective upon receipt of cash assistance.

### **Drug-Related Convictions**

In accordance with Section 16 of the Arkansas Personal Responsibility and Public Assistance Reform Act, Arkansas opts out of Section 115 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. Section 115 states that assistance may be denied to anyone who has been convicted of any felony involving a controlled substance including the use or possession of a controlled substance

### **Minor Parent Living Arrangements**

An unmarried parent under the age of 18 must reside in a place of residence maintained by a parent, legal guardian, or other adult relative except in the following situations:

- a. It has been determined that the unmarried minor parent's current living arrangement is appropriate. In this situation, the minor parent and child will be required to continue to reside in such living arrangement as a condition of eligibility unless it is determined that such living arrangement is no longer appropriate due to changed circumstances.
- b. The minor parent has no parent, legal guardian, or other adult relative of his or her own who is living or whose whereabouts are known.
- c. The minor parent's parent or legal guardian will not allow the minor parent and child to live in his/her home and there is no other adult relative who will allow the minor parent and child to live in their home.
- d. The minor parent or child is being or has been subjected to serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation in the home of the minor parent's parent or legal guardian.
- e. Substantial evidence exists of an act or failure to act that places the minor parent or child at risk of imminent or serious harm in the home of the minor parent's parent or legal guardian.
- f. The agency determines that it is in the best interest of the minor parent's child to waive the living arrangement requirement for the minor parent and child.

### **Family Violence Option (FVO)**

Arkansas continues to utilize the Family Violence Option (FVO) for victims of domestic violence. This will allow us to modify program requirements and extend time limits to help victims of domestic violence.

B. REQUIRE A PARENT OR CARETAKER RECEIVING ASSISTANCE TO ENGAGE IN WORK (DEFINED BY THE STATE) ONCE THE STATE DETERMINES THE PARENT OR CARETAKER IS READY TO ENGAGE IN WORK, OR ONCE HE OR SHE HAS RECEIVED 24 MONTHS OF ASSISTANCE, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER, CONSISTENT WITH THE CHILD CARE EXCEPTION AT 407(E)(2) (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(II) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

In accordance with federal requirements, Arkansas requires parents and caretakers to engage in work as a condition of ongoing eligibility unless they are unable to do so due to one or more of the specific criteria outlined in our Exemptions/Deferrals policy. A non-parent adult caretaker who has chosen not to be included as an eligible member is not required to participate in work activities.

Minor parents are excluded from the employment requirement, however, they must be engaged in appropriate education or training programs.

The following individuals may be exempted or temporarily deferred from any work activity requirement:

- A parent caring for a child:
  - a. Under three (3) months of age; or
  - b. Between three (3) and twelve (12) months of age if child care for such child is not available.

Note: A parent may be exempted for this reason for a maximum of twelve (12) months in his or her adult lifetime.

- An individual with disabilities (parent or caregiver)
- A woman in the third trimester of pregnancy.
- A parent or caregiver who is caring for individuals with disabilities (child relative or adult relative) living in the home.
- A teen parent/head-of-household under the age of twenty (20) who maintains satisfactory attendance as a full-time student at a secondary school.
- An individual for who support services necessary to engage in a work activity are not available.
- An individual who is unable to participate in work activities due directly to the effects of domestic violence.
- An individual unable to participate in a work activity due to circumstances beyond his or her control.
- A parent or other adult caretaker who is over sixty-(60)-years of age.

The twenty-four (24) month time limit will not apply in any month in which an individual is exempt/deferred for any of the above reasons. In addition, the following individuals may receive an extension of the time limit:

- An individual who cooperated and participated in required activities but was unable to obtain employment because of circumstances beyond his or her control.

Time limit, particularly, but not limited to, cases in which it is necessary to protect the child from risk of neglect.

Individuals participating in education and training activities who have reached the end of their twenty-four (24) month cumulative limit on financial assistance, have complied with all TEA requirements and are within six (6) months of completing their current education or training program. However, the Local office can make an exception and provide an extension to the six months on a case-by case-basis.

Exemption or deferral from the twenty-four month time limit does not exempt an individual from the federal sixty-(60)-month time limit. Therefore, individuals who have reached the sixty-(60)-month time limit due to exemptions or deferrals from the twenty-four month time limit may receive an extension of the 60-month time limit if the individual meets one of the following hardship extension criteria:

- a. The adult has a physical or mental impairment that is too severe for Rehabilitation services and the individual has been denied SSA/SSI disability through an appeal.
- b. The adult is receiving services through Arkansas Rehabilitation Services in a sheltered workshop and ARS has stated that is the extent of activities the individual can do.
- c. The adult is receiving treatment through the Severe Barriers Project and the Severe Barriers Project team is providing case management services.
- d. The adult has been, and continues to be, unable to participate in work activities due directly to the effects of domestic violence.
- e. The adult was unable to participate in work activities due to circumstances beyond the adult's control.

C. ENSURE THAT PARENTS AND CARETAKERS RECEIVING ASSISTANCE ENGAGE IN WORK IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 407 (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(III) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT). CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIRED STRATEGIC ELEMENTS DISCUSSED IN SECTION II (A)(2) HEREIN, PROVIDE A SPECIFIC ANALYSIS OF HOW THE STATE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ARE ADDRESSING EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES FOR PARENTS OR CARETAKERS RECEIVING ASSISTANCE

As articulated in the federally-approved Work Verification Plan, Arkansas determines the appropriate number of hours of work participation for each parent and caretaker. The appropriate number of hours is based upon the development of the participant's employment plan. Note: The approved Work Verification Plan may be viewed at:  
<https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/temporary-assistance-for-needy-families/>

Arkansas has implemented the following minimum number of hours of participation in work activities for Single Parent and Two-Parent Cases:

- Single Parent Cases - A single TANF/TEA participant must be engaged in work activities for a minimum of 30 hours per week.
- Two-Parent Cases - In two parent families, one parent must be engaged in a work activity for a minimum of 35 hours per week. If the second parent is not deferred, then both parents must be

engaged in work activities - one for a minimum of 35 hours per week and the other for a minimum of 20 hours per week.

Once the employment plan has been developed, the case manager inputs this data into the state's ANSWER system that opens the case. Case managers then obtain documentation of actual hours of participation and, upon verification, enter these hours into the state's TANF Program IT System, called ANSWER.

The ANSWER System tracks the actual hours of participation entered for the required activities. In order to remain eligible to receive financial assistance, a participant must participate in the activities outlined in the employment plan for the required number of hours. ANSWER assists the case manager in recognizing the lack of sufficient hours entered via Exception Reports. These Exception Reports are generated monthly and contain those participants who have not participated in enough hours to comply with the federal requirements.

### **Work and Self-Sufficiency**

As a condition of eligibility, parents, and other adult caretakers who are included as eligible family members, will be required to seek and accept employment unless they are unable to do so due to one or more of the criteria outlined in Section 5 (Exemptions/Deferrals). Minor parents are excluded from the employment requirement, however must be engaged in education or career and technical education.

### **Applicant Intake**

During the initial interview with the applicant, information will be obtained regarding household and family employment circumstances. This information will be assessed and options or courses of action will be discussed with the applicant. The family may be diverted from assistance at this point through a Diversion Assistance payment (See Section 6.6 regarding Diversion).

### **Employability Assessment**

The purpose of the employability assessment will be to determine the applicant's abilities, talents, proficiencies/deficiencies, etc. The assessment is completed to determine the applicant's ability to move into employment and may be done by an agency or organization other than DWS.

During the assessment, the DWS Workforce Specialist will present an orientation/overview of the program, gather pertinent information, and identify barriers that may prevent the applicant from becoming self-sufficient through employment. The DWS Workforce Specialist may also identify the following.

- - Family situation/circumstances
  - Employment history/work experience
  - Educational attainment/ literacy level/functional educational level
  - Skills
  - Interests
  - Supportive Service needs, if any.

NOTE: Participants who are identified as victims of domestic violence will be referred for appropriate services. Appropriate services may include but are not limited to:

Counseling, housing relocation assistance, referral to mental health, referral to prosecuting attorney and/or law enforcement and the DHS Division of Children and Family Services. The DWS Workforce Specialist will, where appropriate, use all available resources to help the victim of domestic violence receive timely/needed services.

### **Employment Plan**

Information obtained during the assessment will be used to develop the Employment Plan and engage the participant in work or a work-related activity designed to move him/her into full-time employment in the shortest period of time.

The employment plan is a written document that specifies a planned series of actions necessary for the participant to accept full time employment. The plan will identify (1) the participant's employment goals; (2) problems or impediments which may delay or adversely affect employment and what is needed to solve those problems; (3) the particular TEA work activity which is most appropriate for the participant; and (4) specific actions planned with, for, and by the participant in order to attain employment.

During the employment-planning interview, the DWS Workforce Specialist verifies, with the participant, the severity of any problems (i.e., poor/lack of housing, drug abuse, and domestic violence) and identifies actions required to alleviate them. Services will be limited to those necessary for the participant to accept employment.

Upon completion of the assessment process, the DWS Workforce Specialist may engage the participant in one or more of the following work activities: Employment (Unsubsidized or Subsidized); Education; Career and Technical Education; Job Skills Training; Job Search/Job Readiness; On-the-Job Training; Community Service, Work Experience Training and Micro-Enterprise (self-employment).

### **Work Activities**

Arkansas defines its work activities in accordance with federal guidelines, as submitted in the State's approved Work Verification Plan. The Work Verification Plan can be accessed by the public on the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services webpage at:  
<https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/temporary-assistance-for-needy-families/>

### **Employment**

This activity is for participants who enter employment but are not yet self-sufficient. Employed participants may be involved in additional activities directed at increasing their earning potential. To the extent possible, program services for participants will be arranged so as not to conflict with the participant's employment.

Employment may be either unsubsidized or subsidized.

#### **Unsubsidized Employment**

Unsubsidized employment is supervised full-time or part-time employment in the public or private sector with wages paid by the employer that are not supplemented by TANF or any other public program. The determination of whether or not employment is subsidized depends on whether the employer, rather than the participant, receives a direct subsidy. Self-employment and College Work Study are considered unsubsidized employment in Arkansas.

### Subsidized Employment

Subsidized private sector employment is supervised employment in the private sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing a participant for an established trial period. It is agreed that at the end of the trial period, not to exceed six months, the subsidized employment may be in either the private sector or public sector. Such employment is directly supplemented by federal or state funds.

Subsidized public sector employment is defined as supervised employment in the public sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing a participant for an established trial period. It is agreed that at the end of the trial period, not to exceed six months, the employer is expected to retain the participant as a regular employee without receiving a subsidy.

In subsidized employment, both Private and Public, the participant must receive the same wages, benefits, and working conditions as other employees who are performing comparable work. The employer must meet or exceed Federal Minimum Wage requirements.

### **Education Directly Related to Employment**

This activity is an educational program that is related to a specific occupation, job, or job offer. This includes courses designed to provide the knowledge and skills for specific occupations or work settings and includes English for Speakers of Other Languages and Basic Education. When it is a prerequisite for employment by an employer, this activity may include education leading to a GED or a high school equivalency diploma. Supervised time spent in study halls is included in the definition.

### **Career and Technical Education**

Career and Technical Education (not to exceed 12 months with respect to any individual) is organized educational programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations requiring training. Vocational Education does not include baccalaureate or advanced degrees.

Career and Technical Education must be provided by education or training organizations such as: vocational-technical schools, community colleges, postsecondary institutions, proprietary schools, non-profit organizations, and secondary schools that offer vocational education.

### **Job Skills Training**

Job skills training is training or education for job skills required by an employer to provide an individual with the ability to obtain employment or to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace.

Job skills training includes customized training that meets the needs of a specific employer, general training that prepares an individual for employment, and vocational education training that continues after the twelve-month time limit, if it fits in the definition of this activity.

### **Job Search and Job Readiness**

Job search and job readiness is assistance in seeking or obtaining employment or the preparation for seeking or obtaining employment. Job search activities include making contact with potential employers, applying for vacancies, and interviewing for jobs. Job readiness activities include classes or workshops where participants can improve their employability

skills. Participants learn techniques such as resume writing, workplace etiquette, interviewing, and life skills.

Job readiness activities also include substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment (including mental health treatment needed to address domestic violence), or rehabilitation activities for those who are otherwise employable.

Such treatment or therapy must be determined to be necessary and certified by a qualified medical or mental health professional or treatment provider.

### **On-the-Job Training**

On-the-job training (OJT) is training in the public or private sector that is given to a paid employee while he or she is engaged in productive work and that provides knowledge and skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job. On-the-job training differs from subsidized employment in that the OJT employer receives a subsidy to help with costs associated with training. "Supported work" for individuals with disabilities is considered OJT if onsite training is included.

### **Community Service**

Community service is a structured program with activities designed to improve the employability of participants not otherwise able to obtain employment, and must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily.

Participation in Community Service enables participants with limited or no experience to learn valuable work habits and socialization skills that employers require of their workers. Community Service activities are performed with a government entity (city, county or state), or community and charitable organizations.

### **Work Experience**

Work Experience is supervised unpaid work in a public-sector or private-sector setting that allows participants to develop employment/job skills and improve work habits through time-limited unsalaried job training at a clearly defined, well-supervised training site. The Work Experience definition includes Unpaid Internships. Unpaid Internships are short-term and usually part-time worksite learning assignments with a public or private organization that enhances the participant's employability through skill building. The participant does not receive a wage.

### ***Self-Employment***

Self-employment is defined as income generated from working for one's self rather than for others. The number of hours of self-employment counted towards participation is determined by calculating the participant's gross income, minus business expenses, divided by the Federal Minimum Wage.

### **Satisfactory Attendance at Secondary School**

As a condition of eligibility for TANF cash assistance, a teen parent who does not have a high school diploma or a GED will participate in this activity.

This activity is defined as high school attendance or participation in a GED preparation class.

### **Providing Childcare**

This is a defined, structured activity whereby a participant provides unpaid childcare to enable another TANF participant to participate in a community service program. This activity does not include providing childcare to a TANF participant participating in any activity other than community service nor allows one parent in a two-parent family provide childcare for his or her own child while the other parent participates in community service.

**D. TAKE SUCH REASONABLE STEPS AS THE STATE DEEMS NECESSARY TO RESTRICT THE USE AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ABOUT INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES RECEIVING ASSISTANCE UNDER THE PROGRAM ATTRIBUTABLE TO FUNDS PROVIDED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(IV) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)**

Arkansas restricts the disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program. It is unlawful, except for purposes directly connected with the administration of the TANF program, for any person or persons to solicit, disclose, receive, make use of, or to authorize, knowingly permit, participate in, or acquiesce in the use of, any list of names, or any information concerning persons applying for or receiving such assistance. This includes information from the records, papers, files or communications of the state or local or county office; or information acquired in the course of the performance of official duties.

Information concerning an applicant, recipient, or other persons known to the Department will not be made available without the written consent of the applicant, recipient, or other persons known to the Department except to authorized employees of the Departments of Workforce Services and Human Services and other state or federally funded agencies for certain purposes directly connected to the implementation of the program or other federally funded programs based on need.

**E. ESTABLISH GOALS AND TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT AND REDUCE OUT-OF-WEDLOCK PREGNANCIES, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON TEENAGE PREGNANCIES (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(V) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)**

Arkansas continues to operate programs using state and federal funds to prevent or reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, including abstinence education.

The Arkansas State Legislature implemented the TANF-funded Community Investment Initiatives which includes a component designed to improve outcomes for youth. These outcomes include reducing risky behaviors such as sexual activities, drug use, and criminal behavior.

**Plan to Reduce Unwed Births and Teenage Pregnancy**

**Introduction**

Unmarried birth prevention should be viewed as a process, not a program, involving multiple strategies and multiple agencies in a sustained effort. The rise in unwed births is an urgent social problem that resists easy solutions. Arkansas' approach is multifaceted with four major components:

- - o Abstinence programs using funding in the welfare reform act
  - o Improve access to family planning services statewide
  - o Community-based efforts in targeted counties
  - o Two state level steering committees to coordinate the efforts



### **Abstinence Programs**

Arkansas Act 1705 required the establishment of the Community Investment Initiative to provide services to children, adults, families, and parents.

The TANF-funded Community Investment Initiative includes a component designed to improve outcomes for youth. These outcomes include reducing risky behaviors such as sexual activities, drug use, and criminal behavior.

Partnerships are formalized with community and faith-based organizations through the award of TANF-funded contracts on an annual basis.

These community partnerships recognize the reduction of out-of-wedlock births as a priority and have developed programs that include strategies to enhance educational attainment, reduce teenage pregnancies, and reduce the incidence of criminal behaviors by participating youth.

Services offered by providers meet TANF Goal 3, to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies by providing prevention and intervention programs for students who live in poor communities and/or show evidence of academic underperformance, dropping out, or engaging in negative behaviors that can lead to dependency, out-of-wedlock births, or imprisonment.

### **Improved Access to Family Planning Services**

Arkansas Act 1705 required the establishment of the Community Investment Initiative to provide services to children, adults, families, and parents.

The TANF-funded Community Investment Initiative includes components designed to improve parenting and family functioning through services and support to parents, children, and to families. Additionally, this initiative addresses improving marriage and relationship skills among youth and engaged and married couples.

Partnerships are formalized with community and faith-based organizations through the award of TANF-funded contracts on an annual basis.

Services offered by providers meet TANF Goal 4, to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

These community partnerships recognize the importance of both family planning as well as enhanced family functioning.

### **Education and Training on Rape Prevention**

The Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape, and Domestic Violence (ACCARDV) of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) is authorized to allocate and administer funds for Sexual Violence Prevention and Education through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

These funds strengthen sexual violence prevention and education efforts through the provision of grants to community-based organizations to provide comprehensive sexual violence primary prevention aimed at preventing the initial occurrence of sexual violence.

Currently, there are eight (8) programs funded across the state. These contracts solicit the assistance of community organizations to provide sexual violence prevention and education to

youth, at-risk youth, and adults. These programs are designed to change attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that allow sexual violence to occur.

Educational programs are available to specific populations, including males, Hispanics, African Americans, and persons with disabilities.

F. CONDUCT A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO REACH STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS, THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, AND RELEVANT COUNSELING SERVICES, THAT PROVIDES EDUCATION AND TRAINING ON THE PROBLEM OF STATUTORY RAPE SO THAT TEENAGE PREGNANCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS MAY BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE MEN (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(VI) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

The state uses TANF funds for emergency assistance activities that were previously authorized as of September 30, 1995 under the AFDC Emergency Assistance State Plan.

The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services, in collaboration with the Arkansas State Police, provide services to families to alleviate emergency situations, including allegations of child mistreatment, neglect, and statutory rape.

For families who are experiencing an emergency situation, the Division provides a maltreatment assessment of the family needs.

### **Statutory Rape Prevention and Education**

In Arkansas, a person commits rape if he or she engages in Sexual Intercourse or Deviate Sexual activity with another person:

- By forcible compulsion; or
- Who is incapable of consent because he or she is physically helpless, mentally defective, or mentally incapacitated; or
- Who is less than 14 years of age; or actor is more than 3 years older than victim who is less than 18 years of age, and the actor is
  - a. The victim's guardian
  - b. Uncle, aunt, grandparent, step-grandparent, grandparent by adoption
  - c. Brother, sister or the whole or half-blood or by adoption
  - d. Nephew, niece or first cousin

The Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape, and Domestic Violence serves as the lead entity in administering an educational and training effort to increase the awareness of sexual abuse, including statutory rape, provided to state and local law enforcement, educational and related counseling service providers.

In 2007, the Arkansas Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Comprehensive Planning Team was formed by the Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape and Domestic Violence and the Arkansas Department of Health through the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Injury Prevention's Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) Cooperative Agreement. The planning team conducted a comprehensive assessment of sexual violence prevention efforts in the state to articulate a vision and broad goals for Rape Prevention in Arkansas.

Additionally, each year the Centers for Disease Control provides funds to the state for Rape Prevention Activities through which the Commission awards contracts to local entities across the state to provide sexual violence, including statutory rape, training.

The Department of Human Services and Arkansas State Police maintain a contractual agreement that jointly maintains the Family Protection Unit, now known as the Crimes Against Children Division (CACD). The CACD is composed of two sections: 1) the Child Abuse Hotline, and 2) specially-trained civilian and law enforcement officials who assess child maltreatment reports. Again, these child maltreatment assessments include sexual abuse (statutory rape) reports. The CACD maintains an around-the-clock statewide intake process (Child Abuse Hotline) for accepting reports of alleged child maltreatment.

Arkansas conducts programs addressing the problem of statutory rape for law enforcement officers, the education system, and relevant counseling organizations through comprehensive prevention strategies using a public health approach. This includes:

- - o Delivering school-based primary prevention programs that educate youth on healthy relationships;
  - o Training students from middle school to college to intervene when they see someone engaging in unhealthy behaviors;
  - o Working with communities to implement social norms approaches to promote safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments;
  - o Strengthening the ability of the state and communities to plan, implement, and evaluate sexual violence prevention efforts.

### **State Steering Committees**

Separate Steering Committees are currently in place to provide input and direct the State's Abstinence and Unwed Birth Prevention initiatives.

The Governor's Abstinence Education Steering Committee, composed of ten members appointed by the Governor, was established by Executive Order of the Governor. This committee provides input regarding abstinence education programs on a statewide basis.

The Unwed Birth Prevention Steering Committee is a legislatively appointed committee of twenty members. This committee provides oversight and makes recommendations regarding the Unwed Birth Prevention Program.

G. IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AS NECESSARY TO PREVENT ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE PROVIDED UNDER THE STATE PROGRAM FUNDED UNDER THIS PART THROUGH ANY ELECTRONIC FUND TRANSACTION IN AN AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINE OR POINT-OF-SALE DEVICE LOCATED IN A PLACE DESCRIBED IN SECTION 408(A)(12), INCLUDING A PLAN TO ENSURE THAT RECIPIENTS OF THE ASSISTANCE HAVE ADEQUATE ACCESS TO THEIR CASH ASSISTANCE (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(VII) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

TANF Program participants have access to their monthly cash assistance benefits through electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that TANF benefits are only used by recipients to purchase goods and services essential or necessary for the welfare of their families.

The state's EBT Restrictions Plan, approved by the Administration for Children and Families, details the specific policies and procedures related to in place to ensure that monthly cash assistance benefits are both accessible and only used for eligible products and services.

### **Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Transactions**

The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (Pub. L. 112-96). Section 4004 of the Act requires States (but does not require Tribes) to prevent the use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) assistance in electronic benefit transfer (EBT) transactions at specified locations. In particular, the law requires States receiving TANF grants "to maintain policies and practices as necessary to prevent assistance provided under the State program funded under this part from being used in any electronic benefit transfer transaction in any liquor store; any casino, gambling casino, or gaming establishment; or any retail establishment which provides adult-oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment."

The law defines an electronic benefit transfer transaction as "the use of a credit or debit card service, automated teller machine (ATM), point-of-sale (POS) terminal, or access to an online system for the withdrawal of funds or the processing of a payment for merchandise or a service."

The State Plan also must include an explanation of how the State plans to ensure that (1) recipients of the assistance have adequate access to their cash assistance, and (2) recipients of assistance have access to using or withdrawing assistance with minimal fees or charges, including an opportunity to access assistance with no fee or charges, and are provided information on applicable fees and surcharges that apply to electronic fund transactions involving the assistance, and that such information is made publicly available.

### **Implementation Steps (Revised 5/12/14)**

The Division of Workforce Services will implement the following steps to restrict the use of TANF EBT cards at the specified establishments. These steps include:

#### **Step One - Establishment Identification:**

- - o Identifying those establishments identified as "liquor stores" by requesting a list of licensed establishments from the Arkansas Department of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Enforcement.
  - o Identifying those establishments identified as "gaming establishments" by requesting a list of licensed establishments from the Arkansas Racing Commission.
  - o Identifying those establishments identified as "adult entertainment establishments" by requesting a list of licensed "private clubs with adult entertainment" establishments from the Arkansas Department of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Enforcement.

It must be noted that "casinos" are not legally allowed to operate in the State of Arkansas. However, two establishments, Southland Greyhound Park and Oaklawn Racing and Gaming, are statutorily allowed to have gaming on their premises in addition to dog and horse racing.

Additionally, casinos are located in the adjoining states of Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Mississippi. These casinos have been identified and transactions in these establishments will be monitored.

Step Two - Federal Restrictions - Merchant Notification:

- - o Sending a letter to the Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Enforcement soliciting their assistance in informing establishments of the federal restrictions regarding the use of TANF EBT cards in their locations.

Step Three - Federal Restrictions - Participant Notification:

- - o Sending a letter to all current TANF participants advising them of the federal restrictions regarding the use of TANF EBT cards in these locations.
  - o Incorporating information regarding the federal restrictions on the use of TANF EBT cards in the initial assessment process for all new TANF participants. Additionally, participants will be required to sign an acknowledgement that they have been made aware of the EBT restrictions as well as the consequences for utilizing their EBT cards at restricted establishments.

Step Four - Federal Restrictions - Staff Notification:

- - o Development and delivery of training for DWS TANF staff regarding the Federal Restrictions.

Step Five - Development of Program Policies

- - o Development of TANF Program policies that addresses the following:
- - Penalties for clients who uses or accesses TANF cash benefits in an EBT transaction in a prohibited location.
  - Penalties for merchants/establishments that allow prohibited EBT transactions.
  - Process by which agency staff that becomes aware of prohibited EBT transactions to report such transactions.

Step Six - Development of EBT Transactions Monitoring

- - o Development and deployment of EBT Transactions monitoring activities will continue within the existing DWS TANF Unit activities.

**Ensuring reasonable access to TANF EBT**

The implications for restricting TANF benefit access at inappropriate locations is a reduction in the number of cash access locations available to EBT cash recipients. This is especially true in rural locations that have very few alternatives for cash access.

While use of or access to TANF benefits in an EBT transaction is limited as described above, the department is also required by federal law to ensure TANF participants have adequate access to their cash benefits. "Adequate access" to TANF benefits is determined on a case-by-case basis and may vary depending on individual participant strengths and barriers, including access to transportation.

When a TANF client expresses concern with access to their cash benefits or a worker determines a TANF participant does not have adequate access to benefits, the department will take reasonable steps to ensure adequate access for the participant. Reasonable steps do not include granting EBT withdrawals at one of the prohibited establishments.

### **EBT Card Access Fees and Charges**

Currently, TANF participants may use an ATM two times per month for free. Some ATMs and retailer POS terminals may surcharge your account. A surcharge is different from a transaction fee and may or may not be charged by a bank or retailer each time the TANF participant utilizes their card to access their cash benefits. There will be a warning about this fee. TANF participants do not have to pay the fee if they choose not to get their cash at locations where the fee is charged.

Some ATMs and most retailer POS terminals do not surcharge. TANF participants are encouraged to find a location that does not surcharge.

After the second cash withdrawal, TANF participants are charged a transaction fee. If they do not have a sufficient remaining balance in their account to pay this fee, the transaction will be denied.

H. ENSURE THAT RECIPIENTS OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED UNDER THE STATE PROGRAM FUNDED UNDER THIS PART HAVE THE ABILITY TO USE OR WITHDRAW ASSISTANCE WITH MINIMAL FEES OR CHARGES, INCLUDING AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACCESS ASSISTANCE WITH NO FEE OR CHARGES, AND ARE PROVIDED INFORMATION ON APPLICABLE FEES AND SURCHARGES THAT APPLY TO ELECTRONIC FUND TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING THE ASSISTANCE, AND THAT SUCH INFORMATION IS MADE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(VIII) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

When benefits are first issued, Arkansas provides clients information about the fees and surcharges that stores may charge clients when using the EBT card to get cash from their TANF benefit accounts. Clients receive an informational brochure with the initial EBT card disbursement.

The brochure explains that clients receive two free ATM transactions per calendar month. For the third and subsequent TANF cash withdrawal in a calendar month, a retailer has the option to charge recipients a fee of \$0.65 per transaction. Retailers are not permitted to charge a TANF recipient any other fees or surcharges in connection with the client's use of their TANF benefit account.

Additionally, the EBT Customer Service telephone number is provided to clients so they can receive information related to lost or stolen cards, PIN retrieval, or report potential erroneous charges or fees.

I. INDICATE WHETHER IT INTENDS TO TREAT FAMILIES MOVING FROM ANOTHER STATE DIFFERENTLY FROM OTHER FAMILIES UNDER THE PROGRAM, AND IF SO HOW (SECTION 402(A)(1)(B)(I) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

Arkansas does not treat families moving into the state differently than other families under the program.

### **Treatment of New State Residents**

The same benefits will be available to new residents of Arkansas as are available to all other Arkansas residents.

#### **J. INDICATE WHETHER IT INTENDS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO NON-CITIZENS, AND IF SO INCLUDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE ASSISTANCE (SECTION 402(A)(1)(B)(II) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)**

Arkansas provides assistance under the TANF Program to individuals who are not citizens of the United States in the same manner and based upon the same eligibility criteria as US citizens, if the non-citizen meets the definition of "qualified alien". These qualified aliens are persons who entered the United States before August 22, 1996, qualified aliens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 who are excepted from the five-year bar, or aliens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 and have been in "qualified alien" status for at least five (5) years.

#### **K. SET FORTH OBJECTIVE CRITERIA FOR THE DELIVERY OF BENEFITS AND THE DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND FOR FAIR AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT, INCLUDING AN EXPLANATION OF HOW IT WILL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECIPIENTS WHO HAVE BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED TO BE HEARD IN A STATE ADMINISTRATIVE OR APPEAL PROCESS (SECTION 402(A)(1)(B)(III) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)**

Arkansas determines eligibility and delivers benefits under the TANF Program in accordance with federal requirements.

A ten-day notice of adverse action is sent to recipients prior to the adverse action being taken. The recipient is allowed to appeal the adverse action if he or she responds within the 30 day time period. Continuation of benefits will be granted provided the appeal was received within ten days from the date of the notice.

The Department of Human Services administers and conducts hearings in accordance with the Arkansas Administrative Procedures Act 25-15-201 et seq.

### **BENEFITS**

The TEA program provides various services and assistance to low-income families. TEA benefits may include monthly cash assistance; employment and supportive services for cash assistance recipients and Extended Support Services for certain former cash assistance recipients. In some situations, a family may be determined eligible for a diversion payment instead of regular monthly TEA assistance. In addition, relocation assistance may be available on a limited basis.

The State also has the flexibility to authorize the use of TANF funds to provide assistance or services to at-risk children or families through programs deemed consistent with the intent of federal and/or state law.

### **Cash Assistance**

#### **Monthly Cash Assistance Payment Amount**

The following amounts by family size are the monthly cash assistance maximums an otherwise eligible TEA family may be paid:

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Maximum Grant</b>
1	\$81
2	\$162
3	\$204
4	\$247
5	\$286
6	\$331
7	\$373
8	\$415
9 or more	\$457

### **Cash Assistance Payment Calculation**

The above monthly amounts are not reduced by monthly countable income until a specified income trigger is achieved. When the family's monthly gross earned income plus unearned income equals the monthly equivalent of 20 hours per week of work at the September 1997 minimum wage, then the above maximum payment for the family size is reduced by 50%. Based on the September 1997 minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour, this income trigger is \$446.

### **Family Cap**

The cash assistance amount is not increased due to the addition of a newborn to the family. Newborn is defined as a child born while the mother is receiving TEA benefits, either for other children of her own or as a minor child herself, or who is born within nine months of the month such assistance was terminated to the mother unless the mother's case has been closed continuously for at least six (6) months.

### **Penalties for Program Non-Compliance**

A family's cash assistance will be reduced when the adult caretaker or a minor parent is found to be in non-compliance with the child support cooperation requirement, the work activity requirements, and/or other requirements of the Personal Responsibility Agreement.

### **Non-Cooperation with the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE)**

When the OCSE determines that an adult caretaker or a minor parent whose cooperation is required in order to establish paternity or to obtain child support payments has failed to cooperate in those activities and so notifies the DHS county office, the non-compliance penalty will be imposed,

The non-compliance penalty is a 25% reduction of the full cash assistance payment.

The penalty may be lifted at any time upon compliance with child support enforcement requirements.

### **Non-Compliance with the Work Activity Requirements**

When it is determined that a person who is required to participate in work activities has failed to do so without good cause, a sanction will be imposed.



## **Non-Compliance with Other Requirements of the PRA**

When it is determined that a person who has signed a Personal Responsibility Agreement has failed to comply with any other activity required by the PRA (such as ensuring the children receive immunizations), the appropriate non-compliance penalty will be imposed. The penalty may be lifted at any time upon the receipt of proof that the particular requirement has been met

## **Supportive Services**

Appropriate supportive services will be available to TEA family members. Such services include, but are not limited to, case management services, child care assistance, medical coverage for all Medicaid eligible family members, transportation or reimbursement for transportation costs, purchases (or reimbursements) for work related expenses, referrals to appropriate agencies or organizations for counseling, treatment, etc., and other services deemed necessary by the DWS Workforce Specialist for successful participation by the participant.

Supportive services will be available to TEA applicants whose TEA cash assistance case previously closed due to non-compliance with a work activity requirement. Such services include, but are not limited to child care and transportation and other services as deemed necessary by the DWS Workforce Specialist for successful compliance prior to approval of the TEA application.

The Transitional Employment Assistance Program allows for funding for the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success Program to be utilized in Arkansas' TANF program. The expenditures are utilized in accordance with the regulations provided for under the Arkansas Better Chance program.

## **Relocation Assistance**

Cash assistance to help a family move from an area of limited job opportunities to a new locality within Arkansas for full-time employment may be available on a limited basis. Before relocation assistance is provided, the person must have a bona fide offer of full-time employment in the new locality.

## **Individual Development Accounts (IDA)**

TEA recipients may establish Individual Development Accounts (IDA) for the purpose of accumulating savings, up to certain maximums specified in the State policy and procedures manual, for education for themselves or their children, small business development, home ownership, or transportation needs. Such funds will not be considered an available asset in determining the family's TEA eligibility for as long as the family receives TEA.

TEA recipients who secure employment while participating in this project will receive matching fund donations to their IDAs. Recipients who are not employed will not receive matching funds.

## **Extended Support Service**

For those families who become ineligible for continued TEA benefits due to employment, or who choose to no longer receive cash assistance due to employment, or who reach a state or federal time limit and the adult is employed, extended support services will be available as provided for by federal and state law.

Such families are deemed financially eligible for Extended Support services if they were eligible for TANF cash assistance in the month prior to case closure due to employment. Such services will include one year of extended Medicaid coverage for those who meet the eligibility criteria

under federal law for such coverage and one year of extended child care assistance at no cost with an additional year of child care assistance based on the current Division of Child Care fee scale.

### **Extended Support Services — Employment Bonus**

For those families who become ineligible for continued TEA cash assistance benefits due to employment, or who choose to no longer receive cash assistance due to employment, or who reach the state or federal time limit and the adult is employed, an Employment Bonus cash payment will be made to such family provided a bonus payment has not already been made to the family in the preceding twelve (12) months. The purpose of such payment is to help the employed adult meet employment related expenses, until he or she has received a full month's earnings. It is expected that this one-time bonus payment will help enable the adult to maintain his or her employment.

The Employment Bonus will not count toward the adult's maximum twenty-four month limit.

### **Extended Support Services - Transportation**

For those families who become ineligible for continued TEA cash assistance benefits due to employment, or who choose to no longer receive cash assistance due to employment, or who reach the state or federal time limit and the adult is employed, one month of Extended Support Transportation assistance will be made to the family. The payment will assist the family in meeting transportation costs in the first month following termination of TEA cash assistance.

The Extended Support Transportation payment will not count toward the adult's maximum twenty-four month limit.

### **Extended Support Services - Job Retention**

For those families who become ineligible for continued TEA cash assistance benefits due to employment, cash payments for the purpose of enabling the adult to retain his or her job may be made during the twelve-month period following the closure due to employment.

The Extended Support Job Retention payments will not count toward the adult's maximum twenty-four month limit.

### **Extended Case Management Services**

Extended Case Management Services are provided to an individual whose case closes due to employment for up to twelve months following case closure. Periodic contacts are made with the employed person to ensure that necessary support services are being received and to make appropriate referrals if necessary.

### **Diversion Payment**

A diversion payment may be provided to an otherwise eligible TEA family in certain specified circumstances so that the family does not come on to regular TEA cash assistance. To qualify for diversion, the adult caretaker must meet the following conditions:

1. Have a minor child living in the home;
2. Be currently employed but having a problem that jeopardizes the employment; or
3. Be promised a job but needs help in order to accept the job (e.g., needs car repairs, uniforms, etc.)

4. Has never received a diversion payment;
5. Agree to forego any TEA benefits for a period of 100 days.

The diversion payment will be the actual cost of what it would take to resolve the problem up to a maximum equal to three (3) months of what the monthly TEA cash assistance would have been for the family size. Under Arkansas State Law, a diversion payment is considered a loan. If not repaid, it will count toward the adult's maximum time limit of twenty-four (24) months.

L. INDICATE WHETHER THE STATE INTENDS TO ASSIST INDIVIDUALS TO TRAIN FOR, SEEK, AND MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT (SECTION 402(A)(1)(B)(V) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)—

1. PROVIDING DIRECT CARE IN A LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY (AS SUCH TERMS ARE DEFINED UNDER SECTION 1397J OF THIS TITLE); OR
2. IN OTHER OCCUPATIONS RELATED TO ELDER CARE, HIGH-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS, OR OCCUPATIONS EXPECTED TO EXPERIENCE LABOR SHORTAGES AS, DETERMINED APPROPRIATE BY THE STATE FOR WHICH THE STATE IDENTIFIES AN UNMET NEED FOR SERVICE PERSONNEL, AND, IF SO, SHALL INCLUDE AN OVERVIEW OF SUCH ASSISTANCE.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services works collaboratively with the State's twenty-five (25) two-year colleges and technical institutions to provide training to low-income recipients in medical occupations to address the low workforce demand.

Prior to the provision of this training, a determination is made regarding whether or not these occupations are determined as "high-demand" in the geographical area by the Department's Labor Market Information Unit. Attracting and training individuals in elder care will ensure a pool of employees with the skill set necessary to provide quality care.

M. PROVIDE FOR ALL MOE-FUNDED SERVICES THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION: THE NAME OF THE PROGRAM BENEFIT OR SERVICE, AND THE FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA THAT FAMILIES MUST MEET IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THAT BENEFIT OR SERVICE. IN ADDITION, FOR TANF MOE-FUNDED SERVICES (CO-MINGLED OR SEGREGATED MOE) DESCRIBE THE PROGRAM BENEFIT PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE FAMILIES (SSP SERVICES DO NOT HAVE TO INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION BUT THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ENCOURAGES IT) (§263.2(B)(3) & §263.2(C) PREAMBLE PAGES 17826-7)

Arkansas provides funding for the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success Program that is utilized in Arkansas's TANF program for MOE purposes. The expenditures are utilized in accordance with the regulations provided for under the Arkansas Better Chance program.

The Arkansas Better Chance Program is a school readiness program for children ages 3-5 at state licensed child care centers and at schools governed by local health and safety laws for families with gross income not exceeding 200% of the FPL.

TANF MOE funds are not used to fund any other services.

#### TANF CERTIFICATIONS

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Operate a child support enforcement program under the State Plan approved under part D. (section 402(a)(2) of the Social Security Act);	Yes
2. Operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State Plan approved under part E, and that the State will take such actions as are necessary to ensure that	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State Plan under title XIX. (section 402(a)(3) of the Social Security Act);	
3. Specify which State agency or agencies will administer and supervise the program referred to in paragraph (1) for the fiscal year, which shall include assurances that local governments and private sector organizations (section 402(a)(4) of the Social Security Act)—	
3. (A) have been consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations; and	Yes
3. (B) have had at least 45 days to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services;	Yes
4. Provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government. (section 402(a)(5) of the Social Security Act);	Yes
5. Establish and enforce standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage. (section 402(a)(6) of the Social Security Act);	Yes
6. (optional) Establish and Enforcing standards and procedures to (section 402(a)(7) of the Social Security Act).—	
6.i. screen and identify individuals receiving assistance under this part with a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals;	Yes
6.ii. refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services; and	Yes
6.iii. waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for so long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, residency requirements, child support cooperation requirements, and family cap provisions, in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence.	Yes

**EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS UNDER THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED UNDER SECTION 6(D)(4) OF THE FOOD AND NUTRITION ACT OF 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(D)(4)))**

**A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS [27]**

**1. THE NATURE OF THE E&T COMPONENTS THE STATE AGENCY PLANS TO OFFER AND THE REASONS FOR SUCH COMPONENTS, INCLUDING COST INFORMATION. THE METHODOLOGY FOR STATE AGENCY REIMBURSEMENT FOR EDUCATION COMPONENTS MUST BE SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSED;**

**Mission:**

The SNAP Act of 1977, as amended by the Food Security Act of 1985, the Hunger Act of 1988, the Mickey Leland Domestic Hunger Relief Act of 1990, the Personal Responsibility and Reconciliation Act of 1996, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, the Farm and Rural Investment Act of 2002 and the code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 7 Part 273 requires States to operate a SNAP E&T Program. The Arkansas Department of Human Services is the agency responsible for the administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

**Scope of Services:**

The purpose of the SNAP E&T Program is to assist any eligible SNAP recipient who wishes to volunteer in the program the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment through voluntary participation in work programs and education/training activities. The program is administered through contracts and a Third Party FNS match program, with adult education centers, public schools, vocational schools, community colleges, community-based organizations, and work force service agencies to operate a volunteer E&T program.

Participation in E&T is designed to promote self-sufficiency through employment for any eligible SNAP recipient referred to the program. The E&T components include: (Supervised Job Search, Job Search Training), Occupational Skills, English As a Second Language, Work Experience, On the Job Training, Job Retention, GED & Basic Skills Education, Vocational, Self-Employment, Apprenticeship, and Internship Training/Programs.

Arkansas' initial vision of "building on our history as an innovator in the delivery of human services, to develop a robust, statewide, job-driven, employment and training program that will produce a job-ready workforce able to meet the needs of Arkansas' current employers, attract new industry, and build Arkansas' economy" is more clear because the FY 20 AR E&T program will serve 75 of our 75 counties, and 100% of all the State's work registrants including ABAWDs.

In previous years Arkansas had a USDA approved waiver from the SNAP Requirement to Work (RTW) provisions. The waiver was based on labor surplus estimates from the Department of Labor, however like many other States, the economy improved and unemployment rates decreased, and the areas available to be covered by the waiver have decreased or disappeared, and this was the case for Arkansas beginning January 1, 2016. This group is subject to the PRWORA sponsored participation limits of 3 full months of SNAP benefits in a fixed 36-month period unless they are exempt or complying with the requirements associated with the RTW. This 3-year period reset on January 1, 2019.

Arkansas' March 2019 unemployment rate was 3.8%

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Participation in E&T is designed to promote self-sufficiency through employment for any eligible SNAP recipient referred to the program. The E&T components include: Supervised Job Search, Job Search Training, Occupational Skills, English As a Second Language, Work Experience, On the Job Training, Job Retention, GED & Basic Skills Education, Vocational, Self-Employment, Apprenticeship, and Internship Training/Programs.

Arkansas' March 2019 unemployment rate was 3.8%.

Administrative structure of program:

The SNAP E&T target population is designed to assist at risk, childless, able bodied adults between the ages of 18 & 50 to achieve sustainable wages. AR also accepts volunteers who are not receiving TEA or UIB in SNAP E&T. In January 2015 E&T was offered in 13 counties. As of October, 1, 2018 Arkansas began offering all eligible SNAP recipients in all counties an opportunity to participate in Employment and Training if they qualify. The FY 18 E&T counties reported 4737 assessments, 436 were placed in jobs at an average hourly wage of \$8.89.

2. AN OPERATING BUDGET FOR THE FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR WITH AN ESTIMATE OF THE COST OF OPERATION FOR EACH FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR COVERED BY THE COMBINED PLAN. ANY STATE AGENCY THAT REQUESTS 50 PERCENT FEDERAL REIMBURSEMENT FOR STATE AGENCY E&T ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS, OTHER THAN FOR PARTICIPANT REIMBURSEMENTS, MUST INCLUDE IN ITS PLAN, OR AMENDMENTS TO ITS PLAN, AN ITEMIZED LIST OF ALL ACTIVITIES AND COSTS FOR WHICH THOSE FEDERAL FUNDS WILL BE CLAIMED, INCLUDING THE COSTS FOR CASE MANAGEMENT AND CASEWORK TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION FROM ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY THROUGH WORK. COSTS IN EXCESS OF THE FEDERAL GRANT WILL BE ALLOWED ONLY WITH THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF FNS AND MUST BE ADEQUATELY DOCUMENTED TO ASSURE THAT THEY ARE NECESSARY, REASONABLE AND PROPERLY ALLOCATED. A STATE MUST SUBMIT A PLAN AMENDMENT TO REQUEST BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS AT LEAST 30 DAYS PRIOR TO PLANNED IMPLEMENTATION;

#### **OPERATING BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020**

<b>Name of Partner/Contract</b>	<b>Total Contract Amount/Admin</b>	<b>Total Participant Reimbursements</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>% of Budget</b>
Arkansas Adult Education Section of Arkansas Division of Workforce Services 50/50 Provider	3,254,742.00	0	3,254,742.00	57%
Arkansas Northeastern College 50/50 Provider	142,696.50	0	142,696.50	2%
Canopy NWA 50/50 Provider	55,004.00	0	55,004.00	1%

<b>Name of Partner/Contract</b>	<b>Total Contract Amount/Admin</b>	<b>Total Participant Reimbursements</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>% of Budget</b>
Shorter College 50/50 Provider	131,447.00	0	131,447.00	2%
Our House 50/50 Provider	302,528.00	3,600.00	306,128.00	5%
Workforce Development Board of Eastern AR 100% federal grant contractor	217,942.00	0	217,942.00	4%
Total	4,104,359.50	3,600.00		72%
	<b>STATE COST</b>	<b>FEDERAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	
<b>I. DIRECT COSTS:</b>				
a) Salary/Wages	0	0		
b) Fringe Benefits* Approved Benefit Rate 37%	0	0		
c) Contractual Costs (Admin Only, no reimbursements)	1,943,209	2,161,151	4,104,360	
d) Non-Capital Equipment and Supplies				
e) Materials		179,066	179,066	
f) Travel		15,000	15,000	
g) Building/Space				
h) Equipment & Other Capital Expenditures (NG MIS)		337,662	337,662	
i) Other Contractual Costs				
j) Other Direct Cost		631,605	631,605	
<b>TOTAL DIRECT COSTS</b>	<b>1,943,209</b>	<b>3,324,485</b>	<b>5,267,693</b>	
<b>II. INDIRECT COSTS:</b>				
<b>III. IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION:</b>				
State in-kind contribution				
<b>TOTAL ADM COSTS (TOTAL OF ITEMS I, II, AND III)</b>	<b>1,943,209</b>	<b>3,324,485</b>	<b>5,267,693</b>	
State Grant Allocation	State Agency Share	E & T Partner Share	Federal Share	
E & T ABAWD Funding	0	0	337,662	
100% Federal E&T Grant	0	0	1,043,614	

<b>Name of Partner/Contract</b>	<b>Total Contract Amount/Admin</b>	<b>Total Participant Reimbursements</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>% of Budget</b>
50% Additional Admin. Excluding Participant Reimbursement	0	1,943,209	1,943,209	
50% Additional Administrative Expenditure	237,713	0	237,713	
Total	237,713	1,943,209	3,562,198	
<b>IV. Participant Reimbursement (State Plus Federal)</b>				
a) Dependent Care (including contractual costs)	19,375	19,375	38,750	
b) Transportation & Other Costs	218,338	218,338	436,676	
Total 50 percent Participant Reimbursement Expenses	237,713	237,713	475,426	
<b>V. TOTAL COSTS</b>	2,180,922	3,562,198	5,743,119	

3. THE CATEGORIES AND TYPES OF INDIVIDUALS THE STATE AGENCY INTENDS TO EXEMPT FROM E&T PARTICIPATION, THE ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF WORK REGISTRANTS THE STATE AGENCY PLANS TO EXEMPT, AND THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH THE STATE AGENCY PLANS TO REEVALUATE THE VALIDITY OF ITS EXEMPTIONS;

Arkansas will begin FY 20 with 6 contractors serving all 75 counties and 1 contractor that initiated Phase III of SNAP Works for a total of 6 contractors. Arkansas is requesting to participate as a Pledge State in FY 2020 and will use additional 100% Pledge funds as outlined in the plan.

Arkansas will pledge to offer a qualifying activity to every ABA SNAP recipient residing in the State of Arkansas.

Adult Education Section of Arkansas Division of Workforce Services will serve 74 counties. The Adult Education Section of Arkansas Division of Workforce Services will continue to provide virtual case management services to the first 13 rural counties that we have identified as desert counties with low numbers of ABAWDs where a provider could not operate under the 50/50 funding model because of the locality and small caseload numbers.

DHS will continue to use 100% funds in the amount of \$175,000 to continue operating our virtual E&T Project in the 13 counties which are Woodruff, Prairie, Cleburne, Perry, Dallas, Ouachita, Calhoun, Little River, Howard, Pike, Montgomery, Scott, and Logan. In addition to these counties virtual case management will also include Grant, Madison, Poinsett, Searcy, and Sharp counties (for a total of 18 counties). The state plans to expand so that virtual case management is an additional option where physical case management is available in order to



give ABAWDS more options to participate. The DHS County Offices in those counties will provide an office and computer equipment with a camera so that the client can participate in one on one virtual case management with the provider.

The provider will schedule an appointment with the client just like they would a face to face appointment. The client will report to the DHS County Office and County Office Staff will assist the client in joining the online session. During the session the client and provider will have face to face contact so they can complete the initial assessment and employment plan exactly as an in-person appointment would take place. The provider will then email documents to the County Office Staff so it can be printed and given to the client to sign. Once any needed documentation is signed the County Office Staff will scan and email it back to the provider. The client will be referred to resources within their community for services just like they would in an in person setting. The E&T Provider will then verify activities with the local providers. The virtual model will allow current providers to expand their services in nearby counties. The cost per client estimated by AESADWS is \$888. AESADWS will only be reimbursed for clients actually participating in the program. Since these counties are considered desert counties with very low populations the virtual case management plan is the only way that we can extend services to these areas. This will expand AESADWS in 74 out of Arkansas' 75 counties.

. The first two positions are grants analyst positions at a cost of \$52,425 each and a Program Advisor position at a cost of \$72,822. These amounts include salary and fringe benefits. These positions will not be DHS employees and will be DWS staff that will be 100% SNAP E&T positions.

The agency will use \$337,662 in pledge state funds to upgrade the eligibility system ANSWER so that it flags critical months 2 and 3 for ABAWDS. Although a month 1, 2 and 3 letter is generated the goal is to create an alert such as an additional letter to the client and a task in SNAP Works and ANSWER that would notify both the client and provider that the client is approaching the end of their 3 months out of 36.

The Workforce Investment Board, a 100% federally funded E&T contractor, has changed their name to the Workforce Development Board of Eastern AR, and will now serve Phillips, Crittenden, Monroe and Arkansas Counties.

The AR Northeastern College has served Mississippi county as a Third-Party program partner since October 1, 2017.

Canopy NWA will serve Benton and Washington Counties in Northwest Arkansas as a Third-Party program partner that began July 1, 2018. Canopy's purpose is to improve the opportunity for immigrant communities in the Northwest Arkansas area to obtain necessary job readiness skills.

Currently, 100% of Canopy's refugee clients Qualify for E&T services. As an E&T provider, Canopy will be able to serve its clients directly through its in-house employment program. Canopy expects to resettle 75 individuals in FY 2020, 45 of whom it expects to be eligible working-age adults. However, in addition to serving the refugees it resettles, Canopy intends to seek out and enroll qualifying individuals from other immigrant communities who do not currently access E&T services due to language and Cultural barriers.

Shorter College has served primarily Pulaski County as a Third-Party program partner since July 1, 2018. Shorter College plans to continue a SNAP E&T program on its campus located in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Arkansas will assist E&T participants who are not financially able to pre-pay the tuition for short term classes/certifications that FAFSA does not cover. This has been an issue that our providers have reported numerous times in the past. It will also benefit our partnership with the Adult Education Section of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services since they will be located on community colleges across the state. There continues to be a large demand for careers with short term certifications such as Certified Nursing Assistants and Welders.

#### 4. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION THE STATE AGENCY INTENDS TO PLACE IN E&T;

##### Estimated Participant Levels

Figure	Description	Total Estimated
I.	Anticipated number of work registrants in the State during the Federal FY (unduplicated count)	145,280
II.	Estimated number of Work Registrants Exempt from E & T	145,280
II.	Work Registrants Exempt from E&T(federally mandated)	145,280
III.	Percent of all work registrants exempt from E&T	100%
IV.	Anticipated number of E&T mandatory participants	0
V.	Anticipated number of voluntary E&T participants	21,792
VI.	Anticipated number of Able Bodied Adults in the State during the Federal FY. (already filtered for possible exempt status)	13,200
VII.	Anticipated number of Able Bodied Adults in waived areas of the State during the Federal FY.	0
VIII.	Anticipated number of Able Bodied Adults to be exempted under the State's 15 percent ABLE BODIED ADULT exemption allowance during the Federal FY	1,517
IX.	Number of potential at-risk Able Bodied Adults expected in the State during the Federal FY.	11,683

#### 5. THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS THE STATE AGENCY EXPECTS TO PLACE IN E&T;

The State estimates about 21,792 work registrants who do not meet the ABAWD criteria to volunteer for the E&T Program. In January 2015 E&T was offered in 13 counties. As of October 1, 2018, Arkansas began offering all eligible SNAP recipients in all of our 75 counties an opportunity to participate in the Program, if they qualify.

#### 6. THE GEOGRAPHIC AREAS COVERED AND NOT COVERED BY THE E&T PLAN AND WHY, AND THE TYPE AND LOCATION OF SERVICES TO BE OFFERED;

Arkansas will begin FY 20 with 6 contractors serving all 75 counties and 1 contractor that initiated Phase III of SNAP Works for a total of 6 contractors. Arkansas is requesting to

participate as a Pledge State in FY 2020 and will use additional 100% Pledge funds as outlined in the plan.

Arkansas will pledge to offer a qualifying activity to every ABA SNAP recipient residing in the State of Arkansas.

Adult Education Section of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services will serve 74 counties. The Adult Education Section of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services will continue to operate a pilot project to provide virtual case management services to 10 rural counties that we have identified as desert counties with low numbers of ABAWDs where a provider could not operate under the 50/50 funding model because of the locality and small caseload numbers.

DHS will continue to use 100% funds in the amount of \$175,000 to continue operating our virtual E&T Project in 13 counties which are Woodruff, Prairie, Cleburne, Perry, Dallas, Ouachita, Calhoun, Little River, Howard, Pike, Montgomery, Scott, and Logan. In addition to these counties, virtual case management will also include Grant, Madison, Poinsett, Searcy, and Sharp counties (for a total of 18 counties). The state intends to expand so that virtual case management is an additional option where physical case management is available in order to give ABAWDs more options to participate. The DHS County Offices in those counties will provide an office and computer equipment with a camera so that the client can participate in one on one virtual case management with the provider.

**7. THE METHOD THE STATE AGENCY USES TO COUNT ALL WORK REGISTRANTS AS OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE NEW FISCAL YEAR;**

The method Arkansas uses to prevent work registrants from being counted twice within a Federal Fiscal Year is an automated data processing system that has established files of unduplicated work registrants using the social security numbers as the source for identifying duplications. The system counts the number of unduplicated social security numbers at the beginning of business on October 1 each year, and will match the social security numbers on this file with the social security number of each work registrant keyed to the recipient file each work day thereafter. If no match is found, the social security number is added to the file of unduplicated work registrant social security numbers and the count increased by one. Reports are generated quarterly.

**8. THE METHOD THE STATE AGENCY USES TO REPORT WORK REGISTRANT INFORMATION ON THE QUARTERLY FORM FNS-583;**

Reports generated from the agency's automated SNAP records will provide information regarding persons registered for work, total number exempted and new work registrants for the month. This information will be used to obtain the initial count of work registrants and the number of Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents to be served in the E&T Program. This information is the basis for the data reported on line 3a of form FNS-583.

Data collected from Arkansas' eligibility system ANSWER is available for the following populations:

1D Incapacitated Long Term 4G SNAP D/A (drug alcohol) Rehab program  
11 Incapacitated Short Term 4M SNAP/RTW Child in SNAP HH  
1M At Risk SNAP (Able Bodied Adult Without Dependents) 4T SNAP Age 18/Over Student  
3A SNAP/RTW Pregnant Woman 4U SNAP UI applied for or received  
3B SNAP 50-60 years old 4X SNAP disqualified/ineligible  
3C SNAP/RTW Work 20<30 hours SE SNAP E&T Participant  
3D SNAP/RTW 15% SP SNAP cares for disabled  
4G SNAP D/A (drug alcohol) Rehab program  
4M SNAP/RTW Child in SNAP HH  
4T SNAP Age 18/Over Student  
4U SNAP UI applied for or received  
4X SNAP disqualified/ineligible  
SE SNAP E&T Participant  
SP SNAP cares for disabled  
SW RTW/Workfare

9. THE METHOD THE STATE AGENCY USES TO PREVENT WORK REGISTRANTS FROM BEING COUNTED TWICE WITHIN A FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR. IF THE STATE AGENCY UNIVERSALLY WORK REGISTERS ALL SNAP APPLICANTS, THIS METHOD MUST SPECIFY HOW THE STATE AGENCY EXCLUDES THOSE EXEMPT FROM WORK REGISTRATION UNDER 7 C.F.R.

§273.7(B)(1). IF THE STATE AGENCY WORK REGISTERS NONEXEMPT PARTICIPANTS WHENEVER A NEW APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED, THIS METHOD MUST ALSO SPECIFY HOW THE STATE AGENCY EXCLUDES THOSE PARTICIPANTS WHO MAY HAVE ALREADY BEEN REGISTERED WITHIN THE PAST 12 MONTHS AS SPECIFIED UNDER 7 C.F.R. §273.7(A)(1)(I);

The automated data processing system in Arkansas has established files of unduplicated work registrants using the social security numbers as the source for identifying duplications. The system counts the number of unduplicated social security numbers at the beginning of business on October 1, each year and will match the social security numbers on this file with the social security number of each work registrant keyed to the recipient file each work day thereafter. If no match is found, the social security number is added to the file of unduplicated work

registrant social security numbers and the count increased by one. Reports are generated quarterly.

10. THE ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITS RESPONSIBLE FOR CERTIFICATION AND THE UNITS OPERATING THE E&T COMPONENTS, INCLUDING UNITS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM, IF AVAILABLE. FNS IS SPECIFICALLY CONCERNED THAT THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION BE EFFICIENT AND THAT NONCOMPLIANCE BY THE PARTICIPANT BE REPORTED TO THE CERTIFICATION UNIT WITHIN 10 WORKING DAYS AFTER THE NONCOMPLIANCE OCCURS;

Currently, county office workers are responsible for the following duties: intake, application processing, recertification, work registration, and referring non-ABAWD work registrants to the E&T Program if these individuals are interested in participating in the program. Each household member subject to the work registration requirements will be notified by the DHS worker that he or she has been work registered via the DCO-260. In E&T counties, the work registration notice advises each household member classified as an ABAWD that he or she will be referred to the E&T Program. The notice also advises other work registrants that they may volunteer to participate in the E&T Program in E&T counties. The E&T Provider will be able to use our online benefit check to determine if a SNAP client is eligible for E&T. If a client is receiving benefits it will show through benefit check. If the client comes back as a match in the universe of E&T participants then they can participate in the program and the provider can make an immediate referral electronically through the E&T MIS. The Provider must have the individual's social security number to verify their benefits through benefit check. If the individual is not a SNAP participant may also complete an online application by logging into <https://access.arkansas.gov/Voter.aspx>. Once the client is determined eligible for SNAP then they can be referred through the E&T MIS by the County Office. Arkansas has chosen the option to reinstate the eligibility of ABAWDs who have used their 3 months but who can verify that they will meet the ABAWD work requirement within 30 days from the date of application. If a client applies for SNAP and states that they want to participate in E&T then the application will be approved and an immediate referral will be made through the E&T MIS. The provider will receive the referral the next day and contact the client to schedule an appointment. If the client does not comply with the appointment and assessment process within 30 days then the provider notifies the county office through the E&T MIS and also sends a message through the E&T MIS messenger system notifying them of the non-compliance. The county office will then close the SNAP case and process an overpayment. Able Bodied Adults may be exempt from work requirements if certain conditions are met and a determination is made by the eligibility worker. If the exemption is granted, the eligibility worker must change the Able Bodied Adult's program status in the ANSWER eligibility system. Upon receipt of the referral the provider initiates a contact within 5 days with the individual to schedule an assessment, and logs in the contact to the Referral Log. If the participant misses the first appointment, a second appointment can be scheduled within 10 days. The second appointment will be put in the mail no later than the next business day following the missed appointment, and all missed appointments are entered into the case file and the reason if one is provided. If the participant misses both appointments that were issued during the referral month, enter on the State report entitled "Monthly Report" that the person was a "no show".

**Inter-Agency Coordination**

The Department of Human Services is the single agency responsible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Arkansas. Community based partners, local adult education centers, vocational schools, and community colleges will implement all E&T services in the E&T counties through a contractual relationship with DHS.

## Methods of Coordination

Newly work-registered household members classified as ABAWDs will be automatically referred to the E&T Program. The *E&T Program referral* (DCO-205) will be used to refer work-registered volunteers to the E&T Program as requested, or due to a case action in participating E&T counties.

## Coordination Time Frames

Activity	Agency	Timeframe
Referral of newly registered ABAWDs	DHS - Automated report	Weekly or Bi-weekly
Referral of Volunteer Work Registrants	DHS - County Office Worker ( DCO-260)	Within 5 days of date application approved
E&T Assessment and Component Assignment	Contractor - E&T Coordinator	Within 30 days of receipt of referral
Reimbursements for E&T Participants	DHS - Finance Office	Once policy is implemented, within 10 days

11. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE AGENCY AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IT PLANS TO COORDINATE WITH FOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES, INCLUDING ORGANIZATIONS IN THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM, IF AVAILABLE. COPIES OF CONTRACTS MUST BE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION;

Arkansas has a wide range of partners in our workforce development system including Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas Community Colleges and non-profit organizations are all large contributors to the system.

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (DWS) (<http://dws.arkansas.gov/index.htm>) is the state's primary workforce service. Their vision is to strengthen the economic well-being of all Arkansans and their communities. Their mission is to enable Arkansas' workforce to compete in the global economy by linking a comprehensive array of services for employers and job seekers.

Both of these statements are aligned with the Arkansas SNAP Employment and Training Program vision and goals thus making them an integral partner for a successful E&T Program for our state.

Through DWS, Arkansas is able to connect with services through the Workforce Development Board (WDB) as well as the services offered under the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) to help those at risk Able-Bodied Adults maintain SNAP eligibility while gaining skills necessary for success. The state agency refers SNAP participants to DWS to explain the benefits of the Snap Employment and Training Program to schedule an assessment interview. The state agency has a region by region agreement with DWS to allow SNAP clients to use WIOA as a qualifying activity. DWS notifies local county offices if a SNAP participant is engaged in WIOA based job search.

Connection to SNAP E&T, components offered through such system, career pathways, and credentials available:

Through a proposed broad Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Arkansas Division of County Operations (DCO) and DWS, we have identified the following possible areas for collaboration:

- A reverse referral process from DWS to DHS for RTW compliance.
- A potential for DWS to operate independent E & T programs in agreed upon locations with no timetable.
- A potential to work with DWS on targeted subsidized employment project(s).

Currently, the DHS SNAP E&T program is implemented through local providers who have the capacity to offer a core of program components: Supervised Job Search, Job Search Training, Employment Counseling, GED/Basic Remedial Education, and English as a Second Language, Work Experience, On the Job Training, and Occupational & Vocational training.

Additionally, Providers will assist clients who secure employment with job retention supportive services. Supportive services may include case management (such as comprehensive intake assessments, individualized service plans, progress monitoring, and coordination with service providers), early intervention, reimbursements for travel and childcare, and referrals to other partners. The DHS Central Office SNAP unit provides initial and follow-up training to all E&T providers on how to operate the program, and on required reporting. All providers are instructed on, how to use the SNAP E&T Provider Handbook (attachment 2), SNAP E&T Policy (attachment 1), reporting requirements.

SNAP E&T partners can access information about high demand target industries and emerging industries through the AR Economic Development Commission at [www.discoverarkansas.net](http://www.discoverarkansas.net), Arkansas has assessed 23 potential partners with at least 7 of these assessments indicating having access to workforce information, and have specific career paths that incorporate an employment plan to include wrap-around temporary supportive services that lead to specific credentials available to SNAP E&T participants.

In April 2017 the DHS Office of Community Engagement and Faith-based Partnerships launched a new volunteer portal - [www.VolunterAR.org](http://www.VolunterAR.org). This portal provides Arkansans with a central way to find volunteer opportunities all across the state; assist nonprofits in Arkansas in the recruitment of volunteers to address critical social issues; track volunteer and community engagement; educate the public about critical social issues and attainable outcomes; and promote volunteerism and community engagement.

The portal will be a tool for E&T contractors, as well as SNAP E&T participants, allowing them access activities available in their areas to help them meet required participation hours, and to continue with the SNAP. Credentials or Certifications offered through current E&T providers include: GED, Forklift Operator, Career Readiness Certification (CRC), Administrative Assistant, Customer Service, Environmental Services Technician, Digital Literacy, Workforce Alliance For Growth in the Economy (WAGE), Employability, Customer Service I, Customer Service II, Office Technology (formerly Clerical), Bank Teller, Industrial Technology (welding, heating, ventilation, HVAC), Computer Basics, Workplace Education, Nursing Track, Advanced Manufacturing, and educational opportunities.

Each E&T provider reports on participation by Able Bodied Adults or Non- Able-Bodied Adults to the Division of County Operations (DCO) described later.

Any SNAP participant who is classified as an Able-Bodied Adult without Dependents, and who lives in a county where an E&T Program is operational will be referred through SNAP Works,

the management information system for Arkansas SNAP Employment and Training. We also send letters nightly to our E&T Referrals with the contact information of providers in their county when a case action takes place that requires a referral.

12. THE AVAILABILITY, IF APPROPRIATE, OF E&T PROGRAMS FOR INDIANS LIVING ON RESERVATIONS AFTER THE STATE AGENCY HAS CONSULTED IN GOOD FAITH WITH APPROPRIATE TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS;

Not applicable to Arkansas.

13. IF A CONCILIATION PROCESS IS PLANNED, THE PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL FAILS TO COMPLY WITH AN E&T PROGRAM REQUIREMENT. INCLUDE THE LENGTH OF THE CONCILIATION PERIOD; AND

A conciliation process is not planned as the program is voluntary at this time.

14. THE PAYMENT RATES FOR CHILD CARE ESTABLISHED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROVISIONS OF 45 CFR 98.43, AND BASED ON LOCAL MARKET RATE SURVEYS.

The State will not provide reimbursement for dependent care costs.

15. THE COMBINED (FEDERAL/STATE) STATE AGENCY REIMBURSEMENT RATE FOR TRANSPORTATION COSTS AND OTHER EXPENSES REASONABLY NECESSARY AND DIRECTLY RELATED TO PARTICIPATION INCURRED BY E&T PARTICIPANTS. IF THE STATE AGENCY PROPOSES TO PROVIDE DIFFERENT REIMBURSEMENT AMOUNTS TO ACCOUNT FOR VARYING LEVELS OF EXPENSES, FOR INSTANCE FOR GREATER OR LESSER COSTS OF TRANSPORTATION IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE STATE, IT MUST INCLUDE THEM HERE.

I. E&T Program Participant

A. Participant Reimbursement

The E&T Provider may request reimbursement for expenses that exceed the \$50/month cap as long as both the participant and the provider understand it will impact the \$600 maximum for the year. The state does not issue directives due to reimbursements being approved individually. The E&T Provider Handbook is reviewed during all training. A copy is provided up

Policy 3630 Participant Reimbursement/ Payments

SNAP Manual 01/01/17

Each E&T participant will be eligible to receive reimbursement for transportation necessary to enable the individual to comply with required component activities. Reimbursement for transportation will be based on actual expenses of the current allowable state mileage reimbursement rate or the actual costs (e.g., for bus service or transportation provider) whichever is greater but not to exceed the maximum of \$50 allowed per calendar month per participant. E&T reimbursements for transportation may include transportation such as:

- Bus tokens
- Gas vouchers



- Prepaid gas cards
- Automobile repairs
- Car pools (reimbursement of gas)
- Mileage reimbursements
- Taxicab services
- Contracts with private entities, such as transit providers who provide shuttle or van services
- Purchase of tires or automobile batteries
- Driver license fees (including renewals).

Other expenses related to E&T Program participation such as uniforms, boots, tuition, may be reimbursed when such reimbursements are requested by the local E&T Provider. These requests must be handled on a case-by-case basis and may include:

- Ged test payments, uniforms, personal safety items, or other necessary equipment, and books or training manuals;
- Suitable clothing for job interviews;
- Licensing and bonding, or background check fees for a work experience placement;
- Vision needs (such as eyeglasses and eye exams).

Payment must be authorized through the Wise system and paid directly to the vendor, unless verification is provided by the E&T Provider that this was indeed an out-of-pocket expense paid by the participant. The worker will utilize instructions contained in the online Wise Help when authorizing reimbursement payments and generating checks for customers and providers for expenses other than transportation. See SNAP 3631 for instructions on authorizing transportation costs. If a provider is providing services for more than one participant, a separate entry for each person must be keyed to RSRP in order for a check to be generated.

Total monthly E&T reimbursement may not exceed \$50 per client per calendar month. This includes both transportation costs and other costs. This reimbursement will not be counted as income in the SNAP budget. See SNAP 5411. Questionable claims for reimbursement should be referred to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Manager for resolution.

### 3631 Transportation Reimbursement Payments SNAP Manual 01/01/17

Each month that an E&T Program participant incurs a transportation expense, the E&T Program participant must complete a Travel Reimbursement Documentation (DCO-243) and page one of the Billing and Routing Sheet (DHS-0187). It will not be necessary to complete page 2 of the DHS-0187.

The DCO-243 and DHS-0187 may be completed in the E&T Provider's office when the client goes there for E&T Program services. Participants may submit reimbursements weekly.

When an E&T Program participant uses his or her own car for E&T related travel, sections A, B, and C of the DHS-0187 must be completed by the participant. The DCO-243 will be attached as documentation of the travel. When an E&T Program participant pays someone else to transport him or her, Sections A, B and C of the DHS- 0187 must be completed and documentation of transportation cost must be attached. If public transportation is used, a copy of the bus ticket or

a receipt should be attached. If the participant pays another individual to furnish transportation, that individual must provide a signed statement indicating the dates on which transportation was provided and the amount paid for the transportation.

The E&T Provider will not sign or date the DHS-0187. Instead, the form will be scanned and uploaded to SNAP Works. DCO staff will sign the form in the area entitled "DHS Authorized Signature" and will authorize the payment via the Wise system. Instructions may be accessed via online Wise Help. E&T providers will be required to submit reimbursements within a week of receipt from participant.

NOTE: Each time a reimbursement is to be authorized, the worker must check the client's mailing address displayed on WISE to be sure it is the current/correct one. The Wise mailing address needs to be corrected before a reimbursement check is authorized.

NOTE: When public transportation is used for E&T activities, a copy of the bus ticket or a receipt must be attached to submitted documents if client is claiming actual cost for reimbursement beyond the State's allotted amount, 273.7(d)(4) and (4)(ii).

#### Invoices

Invoices will be required for reimbursement of any approved Employment and Training Program expense. When submitting an invoice to the SNAP Central Office, (OPPD) documentation must be provided. The reimbursable cost will be allocated by the percentage that is used by the E&T Program for the specific Provider organization.

#### B. Method of Reimbursement

Vendors will be paid directly. The amount of the payment will be the actual amount required to resolve the job-related need. However, the E&T Provider must determine if there are any local sources available to meet the need and utilize those sources first. The payment total during the 90 day period after gaining employment will be determined on a case by case basis.

#### C. Procedures for Reimbursement

E&T Program Participants will be reimbursed by DHS only after expenses have been incurred. . Reimbursement procedures will be explained to the E&T Program participant by the local coordinator at the time of the assessment, employability update, and other times deemed appropriate.

Reimbursements will not be released to vendors until the E&T Provider has received verification from the employer of the former E&T Program participant that the need (and associated cost) in question is valid and necessary for continued employment.

Reimbursement cap: \$50 allowed per calendar month per participant.

#### 16. INFORMATION ABOUT EXPENSES THE STATE AGENCY PROPOSES TO REIMBURSE. FNS MUST BE AFFORDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW AND COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED REIMBURSEMENTS BEFORE THEY ARE IMPLEMENTED.

See response to number 15.

#### B. ABLE-BODIED ADULTS WITHOUT DEPENDENTS (ABAWD) [28]

1. ITS PLEDGE TO OFFER A QUALIFYING ACTIVITY TO ALL AT-RISK ABAWD APPLICANTS AND RECIPIENTS;

Not applicable

2. ESTIMATED COSTS OF FULFILLING ITS PLEDGE;

Not applicable

3. A DESCRIPTION OF MANAGEMENT CONTROLS IN PLACE TO MEET PLEDGE REQUIREMENTS;

Not applicable

4. A DISCUSSION OF ITS CAPACITY AND ABILITY TO SERVE AT-RISK ABAWDs;

Not applicable

5. INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIZE AND SPECIAL NEEDS OF ITS ABAWD POPULATION; AND

Not applicable

6. INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND WORKFARE COMPONENTS IT WILL OFFER TO MEET THE ABAWD WORK REQUIREMENT

Not applicable

#### TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA)

Yes

#### JOBS FOR VETERANS' STATE GRANTS

A. HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES TO VETERANS AND ELIGIBLE PERSONS UNDER THE JVSG;

The JVSG program, in and of itself, does not constitute the entirety of Arkansas's veterans' services. Rather, the program is a partner within Arkansas's Workforce Development system. The JVSG is required by law to provide services to veterans and other eligible persons. The JVSG-funded DVOPs and LVERs fill a role in the overall program of services to veterans and other eligible persons. The DVOPs and LVERs are dedicated to their primary statutory responsibilities as defined by Veterans' Program Letters (VPL). The DVOPs focus on providing Basic and Individualized Career Services through case management to veterans with significant barriers to employment (SBE) and other eligible persons. The LVERs coordinate with local business service teams and members of the community to advocate to employers on behalf of veterans and to develop job opportunities specifically for veterans. The LVERs train all Arkansas Workforce Center Staff to network for veterans and comply with priority of service requirements. In addition, JVSG staff collaborates with community partners in order to provide the additional services needed for the veteran community to obtain meaningful careers.

The DVOPs are integrated into the workforce center service delivery model. Veterans are initially identified through self-attestation during registration for services. On a priority of service basis, workforce center staff member determines the eligible person's purpose for registering. Once the veteran or other eligible person is identified, the Workforce Center Staff conducts an initial assessment. This initial assessment uses a customized veteran intake questionnaire to help determine if the veteran or other eligible person has an SBE or if they are a member of another special priority group. If a determination is made that the client is a

veteran with an SBE or meets other special criteria, they are referred to the DVOP specialist for further assessment and Individualized Career Services. Those veterans determined not to possess an SBE are provided career services and training as needed by the workforce center staff on a priority of service basis. The state will monitor Individualized Career Services provided to individuals by a DVOP. In addition to these performance measures, the state will monitor additional DVOP performance measures required under WIOA and in accordance with DOL VETS guidance.

B. THE DUTIES ASSIGNED TO DVOP SPECIALISTS AND LVER STAFF BY THE STATE;  
SPECIFICALLY IMPLEMENTING DVOP AND LVER DUTIES OR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES  
AS OUTLINED IN 38 U.S.C. § 4103A AND 4104. THESE DUTIES MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH  
CURRENT GUIDANCE;

In accordance with Title 38 U.S.C. Section 4103(a), DVOPs provide Individual Career Services to eligible veterans and eligible persons to meet their employment needs, prioritizing services to disabled and special disabled veterans, as defined by Title 38 U.S.C. Section 4211, and to other eligible veterans in accordance with priorities determined by the Secretary. The statute also requires that DVOPs place maximum emphasis on assisting veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. This aligns with the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL VETS) to provide meaningful services that promote successful careers for eligible veterans and eligible persons. DVOPs provide employment assistance through Basic and Individualized Career Services in a case management service delivery strategy including, at minimum, an objective assessment to veterans identified with an SBE, including disabled and special disabled veterans.

A special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(1) and (3); special disabled and disabled veterans are those: Those who are entitled to compensation (or who, but for the receipt of military retired pay, would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; or, who were discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability;

- A homeless person, as defined in Sections 103(a) and (b) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. I 1302(a) and (b)), as amended;
- A recently-separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(6), who has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months;
- An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38), who is currently incarcerated or who has been released from incarceration;
- A veteran lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or
- A low-income individual (as defined by WIOA Section 3 (36).
- Veterans Aged 18 to 24
- Vietnam-era Veterans
- Eligible Transitioning Service Members, Spouses and Caregivers

Once the veteran or other eligible person is identified, the Workforce Center Staff conducts an initial assessment. This initial assessment uses a customized veteran intake questionnaire to help determine if the veteran or other eligible person has an SBE or if they are a member of another special priority group. If a determination is made that the client is a veteran with an SBE or meets other special criteria, they are referred to the DVOP specialist for further assessment and Individualized Career Services. Those veterans determined not to possess an SBE are provided career services and training as needed by the workforce center staff on a priority of service basis. The state will monitor Individualized Career Services provided to individuals by a DVOP. In addition to these performance measures, the state will monitor additional DVOP performance measures required under WIOA and in accordance with DOL VETS guidance.

## **DVOP**

All duties assigned to DVOPs are performed in accordance with those prescribed by Title 38, Chapters 41 and 42. DVOPs assist disabled veterans as a priority group in addition to veterans and other eligible persons with SBEs who require individualized career services as outlined in the current VPL. The DVOPs assigned to the VR&E program work closely with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) staff to provide career guidance and pre-rehab plan assessment information. This collaboration is in accordance with the processes outlined in the most recent VPL -National Implementation of the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment and Veterans' Employment and Training Service Partnership Project. The population served by DVOPs includes any veteran ages 18 -24 or any other population specified by the Assistant Secretary.

The Secretary of Labor has identified veterans, ages 18-24, as eligible for DVOP services because of this population's high rate of unemployment. DVOPs will initiate and foster ongoing and active lines of communication with local organizations that provide services to targeted veterans groups or others with significant barriers to employment. They will be expected to actively maintain contact with County Veteran Service Officers and detention facilities within their area. Arkansas plans to increase outreach activities to Veterans Centers, Community Based Outreach Clinics, and other similar organizations and agencies that serve veterans in the identified target groups.

Arkansas continues to out-station a DVOP at the Fort Roots, VA Medical Hospital, in response to the high number of SBE Veterans discharged through the VR&E program. All duties assigned to DVOP are performed in accordance with those prescribed by Title 38, Chapters 41 and 42. The DVOP assist disabled veterans as a priority group in addition to veterans and other eligible persons with SBEs who require individualized career services as outlined in the current VPL. The DVOP assigned to the VR&E program work closely with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) staff to provide career guidance assessment information. This collaboration is in accordance with the processes outlined in the most recent VPL and Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment and Veterans' Employment and Training Service Guide (TAG).

In conjunction with using Arkansas' labor market information, DVOP specialists will be required to utilize the Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient (**TORQ**) which is a web-based assessment system. TORQ assists in identifying a veteran's knowledge, skills and abilities acquired during previous work experience. It then utilizes that information to rank alternative demand occupations based on the ability to easily move into that occupation by identifying any skills gap the veteran may have. The system combines Arkansas state and local labor market information, which includes the median wage and job outlook in the area for the suggested

occupations, with O\*Net knowledge, skills and abilities, and current job posting information (from Job Central, Simply Hired, Indeed and Arkansas Job Link) to provide veterans with the most relevant and up-to-date information and assist them in identifying any possible career change.

DVOPs will be required to work with veterans to provide assessments, develop individual employment plans, and manage referrals to services to address identified barriers to employment. DVOP specialists will be expected to provide a full range of services to veterans including but not limited to:

- - Comprehensive assessment of skill levels and service needs;
  - Development of an individual employment plan with identified employment goals;
  - Appropriate achievement objectives and an appropriate combination of services for the veteran to achieve employment goals;
  - Individual and group employment counseling, and career planning;
  - Short term pre-vocational services that may include academic skills, communication skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and personal conduct to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training.

Once significant barriers to employment are identified by Wagner-Peyser staff, veterans will be directed to the nearest DVOP for a comprehensive assessment and the development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), if necessary. DVOP staff providing individual career services will be required to use Arkansas JobLink (AJL) to record services, case notes, referrals, and follow-up services.

## **LVER**

Arkansas LVER staff will advocate, on behalf of veterans, with businesses and industries. LVERs will perform the full range of employer outreach activities, which are offered through the workforce system. Staff will report outreach activities, on a quarterly basis, in the Manager's Quarterly Report. This includes the facilitation of employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans through the state's employment service. They are, but are not limited to:

- - Planning and participating in job and career fairs;
  - Conducting employer outreach;
  - Conducting job search workshops, and establishing job search groups;
  - Coordinating with unions, apprenticeships programs and business or business organizations to promote and secure employment and training programs for veterans;
  - Informing Federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans;
  - Promoting credentialing and licensing opportunities for veterans; and
  - Coordinating and participating with other business outreach.

LVERs will also have an active partnership with community-based organizations that provide or coordinate an array of services to veterans.

LVERs are fully integrated into Business Service Team and promote Arkansas veterans to local employers by highlighting the advantages of hiring veterans and create job development contacts. The services of LVERs and Business Service Teams are delivered through Job Fairs, Veterans Events, and the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves (ESGR). This collaboration serves to attract veterans and employers in need of services by either the LVER or DVOP. In addition, LVERs work with all workforce staff and partners to identify and build capacity to increase resources for all veterans. LVERs also market the Hire Veterans Medallion Program available to employers hiring veteran.

#### C. THE MANNER IN WHICH DVOP SPECIALISTS AND LVER STAFF ARE INTEGRATED INTO THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM OR AMERICAN JOB CENTER;

DVOP and LVER integration goes beyond co-location, and function as seamlessly as possible within the assigned AWC or other outreach location where services can be leveraged to better facilitate the placement of SBE veterans. LVER staff will serve on Business Services Teams in a manner that is consistent with their federally mandated roles and responsibilities. Integration will also allow other than DVOP staff to deliver services on a priority basis. Arkansas will promote cross training in the way of case management and alignment with other providers of intensive services. Veterans and other eligible persons receive priority of service by all AWC staff to ensure access to the full range of resources available within the One Stop System.

Arkansas JobLink (AJL) is the state's integrated web-based workforce development management information system (MIS) used by the state and local areas to share and manage participant data between the Wagner-Peyser program, the Trade Adjustment Assistance program and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program. All staff has access to and can view all services provided to the veteran regardless of funding stream. By partnering with other state agencies, ADWS is maximizing its outreach potential. Efforts aimed at providing information about our services to veterans include promoting and attending local Job Fairs, and Hiring our Heroes and Women Veterans Summits events. All hiring events are advertised in the local paper and video streamed on public access media throughout the local AWC. We also seek the assistance of County Veteran Service Officers for those seeking employment. Arkansas is also exploring ways to better connect veterans seeking employment with Apprenticeship opportunities. We have strengthened our partnership with Registered Apprenticeship in recent years through collaboration with the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition in implementing the Arkansas Energy Sector Partnership grant. Through this collaboration, the state now has a mobile training center which is operated by the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition to provide "green" skills education to apprentices statewide.

We promote the Federal Bonding Program among all our partners and staff to increase awareness of this tool to improve outcomes for the offender population. We also routinely include discussion of this program and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program's target populations when speaking to employers, since many job seekers are members of both of these groups.

**D. THE INCENTIVE AWARD PROGRAM IMPLEMENTED USING THE 1% GRANT ALLOCATION  
SET ASIDE FOR THIS PURPOSE, AS APPLICABLE;**

Implementation of the incentive award program will increase cooperation between and most importantly, the performance outcomes of DVOPs, LVERs and other ADWS staff serving veterans. ADWS will award the incentive funds to the staff members at the service delivery point that successfully achieved the negotiated performance measures and achieved the highest score for services provided to veterans.

The “Veterans Employment Service Award” is awarded to fifteen individuals from within the state. They are chosen from the following categories: DVOP, LVER, and ES Staff members. Although ES staff member is listed, any partner within the workforce system (other than an LVER or DVOP) is eligible for the award).

The Division of Workforce Services performs the performance calculations and identifies the winners. The award amount of \$15,345 (based on approximately 1% of the annual grant allocation) is as follows: First Place: \$1,289 Second Place: \$989 Third Place: \$791.

The selection criteria are based on performance and job service activity from each area of operation. This information is obtained from the Arkansas JobLink System (AJL), the state management information system. This database is used to track the number of Veterans and types of services provided virtually and/or through staff assisted services. Based on the data provided by AJL for each office, we are able to identify if the local office achieved the negotiated performance outcome, and if they are eligible for further consideration. The second level is determined by identifying the individual staff member who served the veteran client. Those scores are then arranged in descending order and the staff member in each category with the highest scores is awarded the respective amount.

This method is intended to provide the most transparency of the process. It also has the advantage of being modifiable to shift the focus to other performance measures or target groups (such as outcomes after receiving intensive services).

**E. THE POPULATIONS OF ELIGIBLE VETERANS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING ANY ADDITIONAL  
POPULATIONS DESIGNATED BY THE SECRETARY AS ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES, AND ANY  
ADDITIONAL POPULATIONS SPECIFICALLY TARGETED BY THE STATE WORKFORCE AGENCY  
FOR SERVICES FROM ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM PARTNERS (E.G., NATIVE AMERICAN  
VETERANS; VETERANS IN REMOTE RURAL COUNTIES OR PARISHES);**

Veterans and eligible persons with significant barriers to employment (SBE), economically or educationally disadvantaged, recently separated, homeless, including domestic violence and other dangerous or life threatening conditions, offenders and veterans between the ages 18-24, Vietnam-era veterans, and eligible transitioning service members, identified in VPL 03-19 as the target groups for services by Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists. The state will focus efforts to increase services and outreach to the target populations as identified in guidance.

The State will take steps to ensure that veterans with significant barriers receive individual career services by DVOP specialists. During the initial assessment, if a veteran self-attest to meeting one or more of the SBE criteria, Arkansas Workforce Center (AWC) staff will refer the individual to a DVOP specialist for intensive case management services.

To promote the hiring and retention of veterans, we are actively reaching out to both two and four-year institutions of higher education to provide direct assistance in placing veterans that obtain credentials and to increase awareness of the range of services available through the



AWCs. This strategy, combined with the Career Readiness Certificate program, is designed to provide veterans intensive services and occupational and computer skills training to help veterans be more competitive and appealing to potential employers. These tools will also provide veterans with an advantage when pursuing educational and training credentials.

The Arkansas JobLink System (AJL,) the state management information system, provides detailed performance reports. This database is used to monitor and track the number of Veterans and types of services provided virtually and/or through staff assisted services. Based on the data provided by AJL we are able to measure at both the local and state level the effectiveness of our outreach to the targeted veteran population. The information is also used to calculate the incentive awards for DVOPs, LVERs, and AWC staff that provide exceptional service and meet performance measures.

Targeted veterans are identified as the following:

- Special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C. §4211(1) and (3); Special disabled and disabled veterans are those who are entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs; or were discharged or released from active duty because of a service connected disability.
- Homeless, as defined in Section 103(a) and (b) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a) and (b), as amended;
- A recently separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211(6) who has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months;
- An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 101(27), who is currently incarcerated or has been released from incarceration
- Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or
- Low-income (as defined by WIOA at Sec. 101(25)(B))
- Veterans Aged 18 to 24
- Vietnam-era Veterans
- Eligible Transitioning Service Members, Spouses and Caregivers

Arkansas continues to out-station a DVOP at the Fort Roots, VA Medical Hospital, in response to the high number of SBE Veterans discharged through the VR&E program. All duties assigned to DVOP are performed in accordance with those prescribed by Title 38, Chapters 41 and 42. The DVOP assist disabled veterans as a priority group in addition to veterans and other eligible persons with SBEs who require individualized career services as outlined in the current VPL. The DVOP assigned to the VR&E program work closely with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) staff to provide career guidance assessment information. This collaboration is in accordance with the processes outlined in the most recent VPL and Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment and Veterans' Employment and Training Service Guide (TAG).

Arkansas does not have designated tribal lands and does not have a specific strategy for outreach to Native American veterans.

F. HOW THE STATE IMPLEMENTS AND MONITORS THE ADMINISTRATION OF PRIORITY OF SERVICE TO COVERED PERSONS;

Per Grant Officer Memorandum 01-20, a response to this section is not required

G. HOW THE STATE PROVIDES OR INTENDS TO PROVIDE AND MEASURE, THROUGH BOTH THE DVOP AND AMERICAN JOB CENTER STAFF:

1. JOB AND JOB TRAINING INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES,

The Arkansas JobLink System (AJL) is the State's management information system. It provides detailed performance reports. This database is used to monitor and track the number of Veterans and types of services provided virtually and/or through staff assisted services. Based on the data provided by AJL we are able to measure at both the local and state level the effectiveness of services to the veteran population.

Per Grant Officer Memorandum 01-20, a response to this section is not required

2. EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT SERVICES, AND

The Arkansas JobLink System (AJL) is the State's management information system. It provides detailed performance reports. This database is used to monitor and track the number of Veterans and types of services provided virtually and/or through staff assisted services.

Per Grant Officer Memorandum 01-20, a response to this section is not required

3. JOB-DRIVEN TRAINING AND SUBSEQUENT PLACEMENT SERVICE PROGRAM FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND ELIGIBLE PERSONS;

The Arkansas JobLink System (AJL) is the State's management information system. It provides detailed performance reports. This database is used to monitor and track the number of Veterans and types of services provided virtually and/or through staff assisted services. Based on the data provided by AJL we are able to measure at both the local and state level the effectiveness of services to the veteran population.

Per Grant Officer Memorandum 01-20, a response to this section is not required

H. THE HIRE DATE ALONG WITH MANDATORY TRAINING COMPLETION DATES FOR ALL DVOP SPECIALISTS AND LVER STAFF; AND

In conjunction with ADWS Human Resources Department, the Veteran Program Technician maintains a spreadsheet of all JVSG staff hire dates and work in conjunction with the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) scheduling staff to ensure that all staff members attend training within 18 months, as required.

Office Name	Staff Name / E-Mail Address	Date Appointed to Current Position	Date NVTI Completed	Staff Position
Batesville, 396 Barnette Drive, Batesville, AR 72503	Qualls, Mary Mary.D.Qualls@arkansas.gov	10/01/2016	7/24/2016	DVOP

Office Name	Staff Name / E-Mail Address	Date Appointed to Current Position	Date NVTI Completed	Staff Position
Benton, 400 Edison Ave, Benton, AR 72015	Farmer, Cynthia Cynthia.Farmer@arkansas.gov	1/29/2018	9/26/2018	DVOP
Blytheville, 822 West Plantation Drive, Blytheville, AR 72321	Bradley, Felicia Felicia.Bradley@arkansas.gov	6/22/2015	4/15/2016	DVOP
Conway, 1500 N. Museum Rd. #111, Conway, AR 72032	Woodle, Larry Larry.Woodle@arkansas.gov	9/30/2014	9/23/2011	DVOP
Fayetteville, 1416 N. College Ave, Fayetteville, AR 72703	Hopper, Sharon Sharon.hopper@arkansas.gov	7/7/2014	4/17/2015	DVOP
Fort Smith, 616 Garrison Ave, Fort Smith, AR 72901	Rodriguez, Juan Juan.Rodriguez@arkansas.gov	7/5/2016	4/4/2017	DVOP
Harrison, 818 N. Hwy 62-65, Harrison, AR 72601	Eppes, Joshua Joshua.Eppes@arkansas.gov	10/1/2015	5/6/2016	DVOP
Hope, 700 S. Elm St. Hope, AR 71801	Sanders, Bryan Bryan.Sanders@arkansas.gov	10/1/2016	3/23/2012	DVOP
Hot Springs, 2254 Albert Pike, Hot Springs, AR 71913	Ezelle, Stephen Stephen.ezelle@arkansas.gov	9/2/2014	4/15/2016	DVOP
Jacksonville, #2 Crestview Plaza, Jacksonville, AR 72076	Woolford, George George.woolford@arkansas.gov	9/2/2014	4/15/2016	DVOP
Jacksonville, #2 Crestview Plaza, Jacksonville, AR 72076	Cook, Russell Russell.cook@arkansas.gov	9/24/2007	9/16/2011	LVER
Jonesboro, 2311 Nettleton Ave, Jonesboro, AR 72401	Norris, Richard Richard.norris@arkansas.gov	11/29/2009	3/23/2012	DVOP

Office Name	Staff Name / E-Mail Address	Date Appointed to Current Position	Date NVTI Completed	Staff Position
Jonesboro, 2311 Nettleton Ave, Jonesboro, AR 72401	Jones, Hershel Hershel.jones@arkansas.gov	4/29/2013	5/15/2015	LVER
Little Rock, 5401 S. University Ave., Little Rock, AR 72209	Bland, Lee lee.bland@arkansas.gov	4/1/2016	8/21/2015	LVER
Little Rock, 5401 S. University Ave., Little Rock, AR 72209	Cohens, Frederick Frederick.cohens@arkansas.gov	10/7/2019		DVOP
Mena, 601 C. Hwy 71 N., Mena, AR 71953	Davis, Kristina Kristina.davis@arkansas.gov	4/25/2016	4/4/2017	DVOP
Monticello, 477 S. Main St., Monticello, AR 71655	Harding, Michael Michael.harding@arkansas.gov	10/1/2016	4/1/2016	DVOP
Paragould, 1015 Linwood Drive, Suite 4, Paragould, AR 72451	Crawford, Cherice Cherice.crawford@arkansas.gov	3/11/2019	8/6/2019	DVOP
Pine Bluff, 1001 S. Tennessee Street, Pine Bluff, AR 71601	Meadows, Howard howard.meadows@arkansas.gov	9/23/2017	8/28/2017	DVOP
Russellville, 104 S. Rochester Ave, Russellville, AR 72801	Teach, Jermaine Jermaine.teach@arkansas.gov	6/5/2017	9/16/2014	DVOP
Searcy, 501 W. Arch Ave., Searcy, AR 72143	Smith, Tina tina.smith@arkansas.gov	2/16/2016	9/12/2016	DVOP
VA Hospital, 2200 Fort Roots Dr., Bldg, 89, North Little Rock, AR 72114	Lytle, Jack Intensive Service Coordinator jack.lytle@arkansas.gov	2/15/2016	10/31/2014	DVOP

Office Name	Staff Name / E-Mail Address	Date Appointed to Current Position	Date NVTI Completed	Staff Position
Central Office, #2 Capitol Mall, Little Rock, AR 72201	Robinson,Stephanie Program Manager stephanie.v.robinson@arkansas.gov	10/27/2013	8/14/2015	LVER

I. SUCH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AS THE SECRETARY MAY REQUIRE.

Arkansas will cooperate with the Secretary in furnishing any such information required.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI)

A. CONTENTS OF A COMPLETE UI SQSP PACKAGE

1. TRANSMITTAL LETTER

August 20, 2019

Mr. Nicholas E. Lalpui

Regional Administrator

US Department of Labor

525 South Griffin Street, Room 315

Dallas, TX 75202

Dear Mr. Lalpui:

Enclosed are the original copies of ADWS' State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) for the Alternate Year and UI Integrity Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2020. The SQSP identifies ADWS' performance during the most recently completed Secretary's Year. As you are aware, the submission of this SCSP represents the first time that ADWS has not been subject to a corrective action plan for failing to meet minimum performance measures. Our biennial SQSP reflects ADWS' performance during the most recently completed Secretary's Year and outlines our strategies for the upcoming Fiscal Year continued commitment to performance excellence and client-centered services. ADWS' Integrity Action Plan outlines the activities that ADWS will undertake during Fiscal Year 2020 to improve the Improper Payment Rate. The SQSP and UI Integrity Action Plan will be submitted in accordance with Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (UIPL) No. 15-19.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Pamela Vance at 501-683-5366.

Sincerely,

Charisse Childers, Ph.D.

Director

CC/pv

Enclosures

THE SIGNED COPY OF THE TRANSMITTAL LETTER IS MAINTAINED WITH THE AGENCY AND THE REGIONAL OFFICE

## 2. BUDGET WORKSHEETS/FORMS

SF 424

Title: 17.225 Unemployment Insurance

Description: Unemployment Insurance Grant - Administrative operation of Unemployment Insurance in the State of Arkansas for Federal Fiscal Year 2019 - Reference UIPL No. 10-18,

Source Date: 08/20/2019.

Funding Total: \$17,209,313.00

Project Start Date: 10/01/2019

Project End Date: 09/30/2020

Name of Authorizing Representative: Charisse Childers, Ph.D.

THE SIGNED COPY OF THE BUDGET-RELATED WORKSHEETS/FORMS ARE MAINTAINED WITH THE AGENCY AND THE REGIONAL OFFICE

## 3. THE STATE PLAN NARRATIVE

### STATE PLAN ALTERNATE YEAR NARRATIVE ARKANSAS — FY 2020

During FY 2020, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) will continue to pursue a strategic direction designed to take ADWS from a mainframe legacy environment to a new web-based environment using server technology and focusing on customer self-service. The intent of this new environment is to better leverage staff resources due to continued declines in federal program and administrative funding.

ADWS launched its Automated Adjudication System (AAS) in July 2005. Like the UI State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES), ADWS' AAS system is a web-based system designed to streamline and increase the efficiency of the nonmonetary determination process. Since AAS was implemented in Arkansas, ADWS has continued to enhance the system to further streamline the adjudication process. In March 2012, ADWS deployed its electronic response system for employers to the World Wide Web. Through the electronic response system employers receive and respond to Notices to Last Employer, Notices to Base Period Employer, and questionnaires regarding nonmonetary issues via the Internet. ADWS is aware that the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) encourages states to fully implement SIDES; however, ADWS' Automated Adjudication System and electronic response system for employers, which is based upon our own server technology and state UI law, enables Arkansas to maintain the same functionality as SIDES along with ability to tailor questionnaires designed to elicit more information from employers with no additional subscription costs to the agency. ADWS will consider incorporating SIDES into its modernized benefits system.

To compliment ADWS' electronic response system, during the second quarter of 2014, ADWS deployed the first phase of its fax manager system. This system enables bar coded documents and any related attachments returned to the agency via fax to transfer seamlessly to the appropriate claim. A subsequent analysis of field and central office operations revealed that one of the biggest areas of opportunity with regard to increasing staff efficiency related to the

number of staff hours needed to prepare and process documents to the imaging repository throughout the unemployment insurance program. During the fourth quarter of 2015, ADWS began utilizing the fax manager system as a gateway to electronically transfer appeal related documents to associated unemployment insurance claim files. The electronic transfer of appeal related documents resulted in a measureable decrease in the number of staff hours devoted to processing appeal related document imaging repository. In August 2017, ADWS implemented the new imaging process throughout the unemployment insurance program. The implementation of the new imaging process has enabled ADWS to streamline some functions and improve overall efficiency of available staff resources.

In March 2015, ADWS deployed its “Claims Processing Hotline” to selected Workforce Centers as a method of leveraging staff resources by shifting one local office’s claimstaking workload to another local office experiencing a lower claimstaking volume. The deployment of the Claims Processing Hotline did not alter existing claimstaking procedures, the only difference being that a claimant may be served at a local office via telephone rather than in-person. Due to the success of the Claims Processing Hotline pilot, during FY 2016 ADWS deployed the Claims Processing Hotline to all remaining Workforce Centers. In June 2017, ADWS deployed a pilot project to selected local offices to evaluate the impact of transferring claimstaking and claims maintenance as well as the diversion of Workforce Center incoming telephone calls to a full hotline environment. During the expanded pilot project, ADWS obtained sufficient data to meaningfully evaluate the impact of a full hotline environment on local office operations, internal and external customer satisfaction as well as UI timeliness and quality standards. The expanded pilot project revealed increased efficiency of available staff resources with minimal adverse impact on claimstaking and claims maintenance functions. By April 30, 2018, all local offices were integrated into the expanded Claims Processing Hotline environment. ADWS will continue to examine its Claims Processing Hotline in an effort to effectively leverage available administrative grant funding.

### **Current Financial Considerations Impacting Performance**

**Staffing, funding limitations and requirements to operate and maintain current systems continue to impact the ADWS’ ability to implement the move from a legacy mainframe environment to an Internet and server based environment. ADWS continues to examine ways to efficiently and cost effectively automate and reduce staff. The completion of the UI Benefits Operations Self-Assessment Tool and collaboration with NASWA’s UI Integrity Center Review Team will further ADWS’ goal of effectively automating systems while maximizing available resources. While ADWS performs well above the median in most performance measures, there are areas of opportunity for ADWS to further improve its performance ratings, particularly with regard to the Improper Payment Rate. As highlighted by ADWS’ UI Benefit Operations Self-Assessment, the legacy mainframe environment is an impediment to fully maximizing available fiscal resources and staffing. Due to continued delay in the development and implementation of movement towards a new web-based environment, ADWS will begin examining consortium and third party products in order to expedite the deployment of a modernized benefits system. A concerted effort to move from a legacy mainframe environment to an Internet and server based environment will enable ADWS to reduce or eliminate barriers impacting the efficiency and accuracy of the UI program.**

Training and retention continues to be major points of emphasis for ADWS in order to cultivate and maintain a well-trained and experienced staff. ADWS continues in its mission of cultivating staff with a focus on succession planning. During the summer of 2018, ADWS began utilizing the

National Integrity Academy as a tool for staff development and improvement for UI Administration management staff. In 2019, the National Integrity Academy was made available to Field Operations staff to further promote staff development and claim integrity. ADWS remains committed to providing quality service along with a commitment to reduce and eliminate improper payments; training emphasis will continue to focus on promoting a thorough understanding and working knowledge of the unemployment insurance program. This commitment to staff development will be instrumental in ensuring continued improved program performance with regard to Core Measures and Integrity efforts.

### **Integrity Related Law Changes for FY 2020**

ADWS continues in its effort to improve the prevention, detection, and recovery of improper unemployment insurance benefits. During the 2019 Arkansas legislative session, ADWS pursued legislation designed to address issues impacting its Improper Payment Rate. Act 453's most significant provisions increases the disqualification period for committing unemployment insurance fraud, increases the length of enforcement of the disqualification, and increases the penalty assessed to fraud overpayments from 15% to 50%. Act 453 also prohibits claimants who have fraud overpayments issued from receiving future unemployment insurance benefits until such time as their fraud overpayment is repaid in full, including penalty and interest. The provisions of Act 453 will be assessed to nonmonetary determinations and overpayment determinations issued on and after October 1, 2019. Finally, Act 375 creates the "UI Integrity Fund" which will consist of the proceeds of penalty in excess of the federal minimum of 15% assessed on fraud overpayments. Act 375 limits the use of the 35% excess penalty to activities related to the prevention, detection and recovery of improper unemployment insurance benefits. This revenue stream will enable ADWS to implement new programs designed to reduce our primary cause of improper payments, Benefit Year Earnings issues; education of employers and claimants regarding their roles in preventing and reducing improper payments; and to ensure claimants are engaged in meaningful and appropriate work search activities.

### **GPRA Goals and Targets – FY 2020**

First Payments – Intrastate: The goal for FY 2020 is that at least 87% of intrastate first payments for full weeks of unemployment be made within 14/21 days from the week ending date of the first compensable week. Actual performance for ADWS for the SY 2019 was recorded at 93.18% and ADWS recognizes that this is a critical area and will continue to monitor first payments in an effort to ensure that we maximize performance results and continue to exceed the measure during FY 2020.

New Status Determinations: The GPRA goal for FY 2019 was that 89% of status determinations for new employers be made within 90 days of the end of the first quarter in which liability occurred. ADWS' performance for SY 2019 was at 90.90%. The GPRA goal for FY 2020 is that 89.0% of status determinations for new employers be made timely. While performance improved slightly from SY 2018 to SY 2019, ADWS recognizes the importance of making new status determinations timely and will continue to train staff and monitor performance of its system and processes to insure ADWS continues to exceed the measure.

Detect Benefit Overpayments: The GPRA goal for FY 2020 is at least 54.5% of the estimated detectable, recoverable overpayments will be established. The overpayment detection rate for Arkansas was 50.43% for SY 2019. ADWS will continue with its efforts to improve preventing, detecting and recovering improper unemployment insurance overpayments.

The majority of Arkansas' overpayments are the result of Benefit Year Earnings issues. ADWS continues in its efforts to educate claimants on the importance of reporting earnings and



reporting the earnings correctly. Wage investigations are initiated on 100% of the cases involving employees reported through the National New Hire Directory and State New Hire Directory. Each week, all hits involving active claims are distributed to local office staff in order to contact claimants and employers to ensure the timely and accurate reporting of earnings during the continued claim process. ADWS' IVR Cross Match System installs control dates on claims whenever there are matches made between claimants and the State New Hire Directory.

Local offices then contact claimants and employers if a week is claimed and there is a match with the State New Hire Directory. This process enables the local office staff another opportunity to address potential earnings fraud and to detect potential separation issues. In October 2017, ADWS began electronically distributing its "Fraud: It's A Crime!" newsletter to claimants who filed a new or additional claim. In June 2018, ADWS deployed its "Stopped Earnings Report" to the local offices. The report is designed to identify claimants who reported earnings for two consecutive weeks and then abruptly stop. The "Stopped Earnings Report" enables local office staff to rapidly identify potential earnings fraud and other nonmonetary issues during a claim series. On August 1, 2019, ADWS began electronically distributing a second fraud alert newsletter, "Fraud Alert—Unemployment Law Changes for 2019," which highlights the increased penalties for committing unemployment insurance fraud beginning October 1, 2019.

### **Assessment of Program Performance in Prior Years**

For the first time, ADWS' performance did not fall below minimum performance standards for any of the established Core Measures. Accordingly, there are no Corrective Action Plans required in accordance with the Additional Planning Guidance for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Unemployment Insurance (UI) State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) as per UIPL 15-19 dated June 28, 2019.

### **Core Measures**

#### Detection of Overpayment Measure

ALP = the percentage of detectable/recoverable overpayments established for recovery must meet or exceed 50%. With regard to the Core Measure, ADWS will continue to strive to meet or exceed the Core Measure of 50% to 95% for the Detection of Overpayments. ADWS' performance for SY 2019 was 56.36%, an increase from 48.35% for SY 2018 and from 47.94% for SY 2017.

#### Effective Audit Measures

ALP = total score of 7 or more and passing scores in all four factors. Passing scores in the four factors follow: Factor 1, Employers Audited = 1.0%, Factor 2, Change in Total Wages from Audits = 2.0%, Factor 3, Total Wages Audited = 1.0% and Factor 4, Average Number of Misclassified Employees Detected per Audit = 1.0%.

Performance for CY 2018: ADWS had the following factor scores: Factor 1 = 1.2%, Factor 2 = 3.3%, Factor 3 = 1.5% and Factor 4 = 2.3%. ADWS anticipates again meeting the Core Measure for Effective Audit Measures for CY 2019.

#### Data Validation – Tax

ALP = all tax populations submitted and passing.

Improper Payment Measure – Integrity Action Plan Included.

ALP = maintain an Improper Payment Rate of less than 10% for covered programs.

Performance for IPERA Year 2018: The Improper Payment Measure is defined as all UI benefits overpaid and underpaid as estimated from the BAM survey of paid UI claims for the IPERA year which begins on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the following calendar year. For IPERA year 2018 ending on June 30, 2018, ADWS met the ALP by recording an Improper Payment Rate of 9.864%. While ADWS met the Improper Payment Measure, strategies will continue to be developed and implemented to continue to improve program performance in this critical area.

#### UI Overpayment Recovery Measure

ALP = The recovery rate is calculated by dividing the amount of improper overpayments recovered by the amount of improper overpayments identified. The ALP for the recovery rate measure is 68% for the 2018 IPIA period.

Performance for IPIA Year 2018: ADWS exceeded the ALP by recording an overpayment recovery rate of 126.51%.

#### **Secretary Standards in Regulation**

Data for the most recent Secretary's Year showed acceptable levels of performance by ADWS in all categories. No narratives required.

#### **UI Programs**

##### State Directory of New Hires (SDNH)/National Directory of New Hires (NDNH)

ADWS' Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM) Unit is compliant with the NDNH matching requirements as set forth in ET Handbook No. 395, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Chapter VI, UIPL 03-07, and UIPL No., Change 1.

##### Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM)

The Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM) Annual Determination Letter for CY 2018 reflects that ADWS' BAM Unit is compliant with investigative as well as all method and procedure requirements set forth in ET Handbook No. 395, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, and through findings established through ET Handbook No. 396, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.

##### Tax Performance System (TPS)

ADWS' UI Tax Operations are in compliance with Federal reporting and oversight requirements. For CY 2018, all TPS sample reviews were passing.

##### Data Validation (DV)

ADW submitted all DV items for validation and certification by June 10, 2019. All DV items passed for Validation Year 2019.

##### UI Program Integrity

During SY 2019, ADWS maintained an Improper Payment Rate of less than 10%. While ADWS has maintained an Improper Payment Rate of less than 10% for the past few years, ADWS continues to experience fluctuations of the Improper Payment Rate of lowering to below 10% and rising to greater than 10%. ADWS' primary root cause of Improper Payments continues to be Benefit Year Earnings issues. During the most recent legislative session, ADWS pursued legislation that will increase the penalties for individuals who commit unemployment insurance

fraud and provide a revenue stream for activities designed to prevent, detect and reduce the Improper Payment Rate.

#### Issue Detection Date and Determination Date

ADWS entered the correct Issue Detection Date and Determination date in at least 95% of the nonmonetary determinations evaluated during SY 2019. While ADWS met minimum performance standards with regard to the Issue Detection Date and Determination Date, continued staff training and ongoing refresher Benefits, Timeliness and Quality training with regard to issue detection dates for adjudication staff. Issue detection date errors remain part of the Adjudicators' and Adjudication Supervisors' performance appraisals; this internal performance standard should maintain the awareness of the importance of the need to maintain the desired level of achievement of at least 95%.

#### **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

WIOA is designed to provide job seekers with increased access to employment, education, training and other support services to succeed in the labor market, match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete, improve the coordination of employment and training services and resources, and strengthen collaboration with state and local partners. During SY 2018, ADWS continued its efforts in fully implementing the WIOA program, in collaboration with the program's core and non-core partners. The State of Arkansas elected to coordinate and integrate as many workforce development programs as possible, and therefore, elected to submit a combined state plan designed to streamline the investments in our workforce development system. The combined plan integrates and streamlines the services provided by program partners: ADWS and its Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and Adult Education Services Divisions, the Division of Services for the Blind, and the Arkansas Department of Human Services. As part of this effort, ADWS hosts biannual statewide partner meetings each spring and fall. These training and strategy sessions included workforce development partners and stakeholders, including employers, economic developers, Workforce Development Board Members and community college representatives with the goal of developing broader and deeper partnerships, integration of programs and services within their regional area to help prepare Arkansas' workforce to meet the needs of current and potential employers.

Additionally, our workforce development partners present their programs' information to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board at their quarterly meetings in an effort to increase the level of integration of the state's workforce program. Moving forward, ADWS plans to continue our efforts in collaborating with private sector employers, non-profit organizations and stakeholders who can assist us in maximizing the full potential of the Arkansas' workforce system.

ADWS has long benefited from the integration of its workforce partner programs, including UI, within its 30 local offices. The longstanding practice of having the UI program integrated into 30 local offices throughout the state has enabled the UI program to ensure that income support is available to eligible individuals who are simultaneously utilizing the onsite services provided by partner programs. To ensure that claimants are aware of the array of services provided through the workforce center, claimants are required to obtain ES staff assisted services as part of their initial claim filing process. Specific enhancements made by UI include notification to claimants with inactive Arkansas Job Link (AJL) accounts of the requirement that their accounts be activated and current, including a resume. Beginning in July 2016, ADWS began notifying claimants at the time of filing UI claims they must upload a resume to their individual AJL account. Resumes uploaded to an individual AJL account are then searchable by employers. An

up-to-date AJL account ensures that claimants have maintained their work registrations and are able to access services offered through the Arkansas Workforce Centers.

### **Maintaining Solvency of the State's Trust Fund**

The continued strengthening of Arkansas' labor market is reflected in the unemployment insurance data for SY 2019. For the weeks ending April 7, 2018 through the week ending March 30, 2019, Initial Claims totaled 93,290 and Continued Claims totaled 590,846. Arkansas had an average insured unemployment rate of 0.96% during that same period. During the comparable period of SY 2018, Initial Claims totaled 102,482 and Continued Claims totaled 707,704. The average insured unemployment rate was 1.16% during that same period. The data for SY 2019 represents a 8.9% decrease in Initial Claims; a 16.5% decrease in Continued Claims activity; and a 0.2% decrease in the average insured unemployment rate.

Arkansas' Unemployment Insurance program served as an important safety net for thousands of Arkansas families during the Recession. Unfortunately, the increase in demand for unemployment claims quickly exhausted the program's trust fund. Arkansas was one of 35 states that had to take advances from the federal government in order to meet the funding needs resulting from additional UI claims. The ADWS UI Trust Fund received \$360 million in Title XII Advances in order to pay UI Benefits. As of the end of CY 2018, the UI Trust Fund had an average high cost multiple of 1.21 and will continue to rise in CY 2019. ADWS projects a trust fund balance of \$855,000,000 at the end of CY 2019.

During the 2019 Arkansas legislative session, ADWS sought to ease the tax burden on employers by pursuing legislation to create a flexible taxable wage base. SB 298, now Act 512 of 2019, is designed to slow the growth of the UI Trust fund while easing the tax burden on Arkansas' employers by providing for the automatic adjustment of the taxable wage base based on economic factors directly affecting the UI Trust Fund. Beginning January 1, 2020 the taxable wage base has the potential to increase or decrease between \$7,000 and \$10,000 every calendar year based on the average insured unemployment rate for the most recently completed state fiscal year. Act 512 of 2019 also contains special triggers that could result in the taxable wage base being set at \$11,000 or \$12,000 depending on expenditures from the UI Trust Fund and the UI Trust Fund balance as of June 30, 2019. These special triggers will supersede the regular factors used to determine the taxable wage base for the following calendar year.

ADWS implemented the Treasury Offset Program concerning delinquent employers in October 2015. For the period of January 1, 2019 through July 31, 2019, ADWS received \$25,979.81 through offsets of delinquent employers' tax returns. An additional \$104,955.09 was received in response to the tax intercept notices sent to employer. Since the implementation of the Treasury Offset Program, ADWS received \$214,126.73 through offsets of delinquent employers' tax returns and \$560,948.39 in response to notices sent to delinquent employers who received notices that their debts were submitted for collection through the Internal Revenue Service.

In addition to the current legislatively authorized activity, ADWS previously implemented some varied strategies to protect or replenish the trust fund. ADWS began participating in the Treasury Offset Program in SY 2013 to recover benefit overpayments. Since that time, ADWS has intercepted \$57,081,171.61. For the period of January 1, 2019 through July 31, 2019, ADWS intercepted \$3,337,630.76.

In March 2012, ADWS began matching claims with the state payroll system, AASIS, in order to detect improper payments to state employees as quickly as possible. The cross-match returns weekly earnings for the match weeks, eliminating the need to send wage audit requests to individual agencies. In 2014, ADWS deployed its front-end identity verification to reduce the

risk of fraudulent unemployment insurance claims. ADWS enhanced its front-end identify verification practices in 2016. In order to make initial claim eligibility determinations faster and more accurate, ADWS will continue to seek to increase employer utilization of the online response systems available to employers to respond to notices to last employer, notices to base period employers, the adjudication questionnaires, and wage audit notice requests. ADWS continues to experience positive results with the online, general fraud reporting system available to the general public on the ADWS home page.

#### 4. CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS (CAPS)

For the first time, ADWS' performance did not fall below minimum performance standards for any of the established Core Measures. Accordingly, there are no Corrective Action Plans required in accordance with the Additional Planning Guidance for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Unemployment Insurance (UI) State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) as per UIPL 15-19 dated June 28, 2019.

#### 5. UI PROGRAM INTEGRITY ACTION PLAN (UI IAP)

State	Federal Fiscal Year	Accountable Agency Officials	
ARKANSAS	2020	<b><i>Charisse Childers, Ph.D., Director; DeeVee Pearson, Deputy Director-Internal Operations; Ron Snead, Deputy Director-External Operations; Don Denton, General Counsel; Pamela Vance, Assistant Director-Unemployment Insurance; Local Office Managers; FIRE Unit; Automated Adjudication Systems; UI Technical.</i></b>	
	Top Three Root Causes (Calendar Year 2018)	Calendar Year 2017 (% of \$ Overpaid)	Calendar Year 2018 (% of \$ Overpaid)
Root Cause #1	Benefit Year Earnings	55.36%	60.81%
Root Cause #2	Separation Issues	21.91%	17.08%
Root Cause #3	All Other Causes	10.50%	8.64%

**Summary: (Provide a summary of the plan that the state has designed. The summary should include outreach efforts planned by the agency to inform all UI and workforce staff, and employers of the strategic plan to ensure everyone understands the importance of maintaining program integrity.)**

ADWS' UI IPIA Integrity Rate for the period of July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 was 9.86%. The UI IPIA Integrity Rate for the period of July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017 was 8.18%. The IPIA Integrity Rate for the period ending June 30, 2018 represents an increase of 1.68% from the previous IPERA year. ADWS continues to strive to reduce its UI IPIA Integrity Rate.

The following causes have been identified by ADWS' Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM) Unit as the top three root causes of overpayments: (1) Benefit Year Earnings: At 5.18%, Benefit Year Earnings issues continue to be the leading cause of overpayments. Benefit Year Earnings issues continue to occur as a direct result of claimants failing to report their earnings, either in whole or in part, during the continued claim process. The percentage of Benefit Year Earnings issues compared to dollars paid during IPIA year 2018 represents a .48% increase from IPIA Year 2017. BAM data for the period ending June 30, 2018 indicate that 55.97% of dollars overpaid is the direct result of claimant error in failing to report earnings or due to claimants incorrectly reporting earnings. The percentage of dollars overpaid for IPIA Year 2018 is a decrease from 60.38% the previous IPIA year. The decrease in the percentage of dollars overpaid suggests that while the number of fraudulent overpayments is increasing, the amount of the resulting overpayment is decreasing due to earlier detection. (2) Separation Issues: At 2.10%, the second leading cause of overpayments is attributed to claimant error, employer error or a combination of the two regarding separation issues. The percentage Separation Issues compared to dollars paid during IPIA Year 2018 represents an increase of .68% in separation issues resulting in overpayments. BAM data indicate that 22.505% of dollars overpaid during the period ending June 30, 2018 is the result of incorrect or inadequate separation information provided by one or both of the parties. The percentage of dollars overpaid for IPIA Year 2018 represents a 3.675% increase from the preceding IPIA Year. (3) Other Issues. At 0.746%, the third leading cause of overpayments during IPIA Year 2018 is attributed to "Other Issues." These types of issues are generally due to claim maintenance errors, appeal reversals, and fraud outside the key week. BAM data for IPIA Year 2018 reflects that 7.99% of dollars overpaid is the result of "Other Issues." The percentage of dollars overpaid because of "Other Issues" during IPIA Year 2018 reflects a 1.066% decrease in overpayments due to "Other Issues" when compared to IPIA Year 2017.

ADWS continues to work to improve preventing, detecting and recovering improper unemployment insurance overpayments. The GPRA goal for FY 2020 is that at least 54.5% of the estimated detectable recoverable overpayments will be established. ADWS' GPRA performance for SY 2019 was 50.43%. ADWS is currently at 56.75% for the period ending June 30, 2019. With regard to the Core Measure, ADWS met the Core Measure of 50% to 95% for the Detection of Overpayments with 56.36% of the detectable/recoverable overpayments established for recovery. ADWS will continue in its efforts to ensure its UI staff and workforce partners are well trained in identifying and addressing issues impacting a UI claim during its life cycle. A well-trained workforce and knowledgeable partners is a critical component in reducing the improper payment rate. Maintaining adequate staffing levels in the FIRE Unit and BPC will ensure the continued timely issuance of determinations and the establishment of overpayments.

In order to continue to improve the overpayment detection rate and reduce the operational overpayment rate further, ADWS will continue to pursue the following major strategies: 1. Prevent, detect and reduce future overpayments by continuing with efforts to increase the number of employers who respond to ADWS requests for information through our

electronic systems; 2. Prevent and reduce future overpayments through claimant messaging; 3. Prevent, detect, reduce and recover overpayments by interlinking more of the investigative and administrative systems; 4. Prevent, reduce and recover overpayments by continuing ADWS efforts to follow-up with employers who have not returned wage audit notices.

With regard to Benefit Year Earnings issues, ADWS continues to educate claimants on the importance of reporting earnings timely and accurately. ADWS' IVR Crossmatch System installs control dates on claims whenever matches are made between claimants and the State New Hire Directory. Local offices then review those claims and, if appropriate, contact claimants regarding reporting earnings. All claims that have a "hit" on the State New Hire Directory and/or National New Hire Registry result in the issuance of a wage audit notice to the employer. In 2016, ADWS central office staff began emailing the IVR Crossmatch hits to the local offices to be more proactive in contacting claimants who have been matched with the State New Hire Directory. This provides ADWS with an early opportunity to verify that claimants are properly reporting work and earnings as well as provide an opportunity for early intervention. ADWS continues to mail letters to claimants who claim the week in which a match was made from the State New Hire Directory. These letters congratulate claimants for obtaining new employment and serve as another opportunity to issue instructions regarding reporting earnings. In November 2017, ADWS began distributing its "Fraud: It's A Crime!" newsletter to every claimant who files an initial, additional or reopened claim. This newsletter is also delivered electronically to all claimants who provided an email address during the claims filing process. In August 2019, ADWS began distributing a second claimant newsletter focusing on the pending enhanced penalties for committing unemployment insurance fraud.

To further combat Benefit Year Earnings issues, ADWS implemented a process during the second quarter of 2018 which requires claimants who reported earnings for two consecutive weeks and then stopped reporting earnings during their continue claim series to report to their local office for a claim review. During the second quarter of 2020, ADWS projects anticipates the implementation of process to conduct random audits of active partial claims in an effort to ensure that work and earnings issues are prevented or detected in its earliest states. A random sample of claimants receiving partial benefits will be required to submit to a random earnings audit during the third and seventh week of the claim series. This will provide ADWS with yet another opportunity to ensure that claimants understand their rights and responsibilities with regard to reporting earnings from work or self-employment. ADWS will also have the opportunity to stress the importance of timely reporting any other potential eligibility issues that may arise during the claim series. The process will be evaluated to determine whether the random audit process should specifically target continued claimants reporting less than 40% of their weekly benefit amounts.

In the third quarter of 2018, ADWS implemented updates to the online wage audit notice response system (IRME), which added a comment section at the bottom of the online wage audit notice form to allow employers to provide additional information. The modification to the online wage audit notice form has been beneficial in detecting new nonmonetary issues outside of work and earnings. All responses are reviewed by a fraud investigator and then forwarded to the adjudication unit for adjudication.

In addition to the enhancements made to ADWS' IVR Crossmatch System, ADWS deployed an employer reporting tool to securely report instances of claimant activity that impact eligibility and an online reporting system for citizens to report suspected claimant and employer unemployment insurance fraud, job refusals and failure to report for job interviews. Referrals

made by citizens are simultaneously forwarded to UI Administration and UI Technical and are typically assigned for investigation within 24 hours of receipt. The quick notification to ADWS of these events, when substantiated, will continue to reduce improper payments.

To emphasize the importance that the highest levels of Arkansas government have placed on preventing inaccurate wage reporting by claimants, beginning in March 2012, ADWS developed and deployed a wage crossmatch that runs biweekly with state employee payroll. This report contains the weekly pay of any state employee who also claimed benefits within the applicable two-week period. ADWS utilizes this tool to identify claimants with earnings issues and immediately initiates a priority investigation.

ADWS will continue efforts to message and to educate employers and claimants on the importance of timely and correctly reporting earnings as well. In the follow-up projects on non-returned 901As from the new hire crossmatches and the quarterly wage crossmatches, FIRE Unit personnel explain the processes available to employers for completing the requests. Additionally, these same personnel are available to provide on-site or on-line training for employers upon request.

In January 2016 ADWS FIRE Unit initiated the Quarterly Crossmatch Review Project. This is an in-house project initiated to maximize detection of overpayments and minimize the number of improperly paid weeks. This follow-up project is modeled after the New Hire Follow-up Project that ADWS has operated for approximately seven years. For the quarters 2017-3 through 2018-2, the New Hire Follow-up Project resulted in increases in returned new hire wage audit notices from approximately 61.75% to 93.94% per week.

In the first year after its inception, Quarterly Crossmatch Project raised the pre-follow-up return rate average of 59.59% to an approximate average of 71.52% post-follow-up, which is the equivalent of 10,791 additionally returned notices from employers. The pre-follow-up Quarter Crossmatch return rate was an approximate average of 71.90% for the period of 2017-3 through 2018-2 quarterly wage crossmatches. The approximate average return rate after the follow-ups for this same period was 82.87%, or a total of 8,421 returned audit notices. The average return rate represents an average increase of 2,105 audit notices each quarter during that period. The Quarterly Crossmatch Review Project performs follow-ups on employers for the previous audit quarter. The follow-ups are performed six weeks prior to a new crossmatch begin date and completed within a five week period. The project began with employers with 30 or more outstanding wage audit notices who did not return their initial wage audit notice requests. The employers are contacted again either by telephone or email. ADWS is utilizing all available resources to increase overall performance and efficiency in the area of detection of benefits overpayments and investigations. ADWS depends on the involvement and contributions of key experienced employees for the future success of this project. ADWS expanded the project in January 2017 to follow-up with employers with 20 or more non-returned 901As. When the unit is fully staffed, ADWS will expand the project yet again by establishing a lower threshold for non-returned 901As. By the end of October, ADWS expanded the follow-ups to include employers with ten or more non-returns. ADWS later expanded the threshold to include employers with five or more audit notices that were not returned. Given the success to date of the project, ADWS eventually will expand this project to review all employers with non-returned notices; however, the lack of available experienced staff to perform follow-ups is a factor that adversely affects these efforts.

The second leading cause of overpayments in Arkansas is separation issues due to inadequate



or untimely separation information being provided by the employer. In March 2012, ADWS deployed its electronic response system for employers to the World Wide Web. Through the electronic response system, employers may receive and respond to Notice to Last Employers, Notice to Base Period Employers, and adjudication questionnaires via the Internet. This system enhances ADWS' adjudication system by enabling it to have the same functionality as SIDES at a lower cost. The implementation of this method of response has improved the quality of nonmonetary determinations and reduced the number of improper payments due to the untimely employer responses to adjudication questionnaires or appeals. Marketing to employers continues to be essential to the effectiveness of this system. In combination with ADWS' efforts to better educate our employers on the importance of accurately and timely responding to requests from ADWS for separation information, ADWS expects a continued reduction in errors that arise during the adjudication process.

To address nonmonetary adjudication quality, ADWS designated an AAS Training Officer whose primary responsibility is to evaluate and improve the existing procedures for our adjudication staff. AAS supervisory staff are required to review a sampling of all adjudicators' determinations in order to ensure consistent and accurate interpretation of Arkansas' unemployment insurance laws. During FY 2019, the AAS Program Operations Manager and AAS Supervisors participated in BTQ training which served as a refresher course on the essential elements of timely and quality nonmonetary adjudications. AAS staff are required to submit to mandatory 100% case review whenever an improper finding is detected as a result of supervisory case review and/or a BAM investigation in order to ensure the proper and consistent application of law and policy. Adjudication staff continue with its effort to improve the quality of the adjudication process by exceeding the minimum number of reasonable attempts that must be made to obtain information from an interested party. The improvement in the quality of nonmonetary determinations should help reduce the total amount of improper payments to claimants who are later determined to be ineligible for UI benefits as a result of the appeal process.

The third leading cause of overpayments in Arkansas is the result of "Other Issues." These types of issues are generally due to claim maintenance errors, appeal reversals, and fraud outside the key week. ADWS continues to educate staff regarding law and policy to reduce and prevent claim maintenance errors, misinformation provided to claimants and employers, and appeal reversals arising from insufficient information. Continued education of claimants and employers will also be a significant point of emphasis in order to prevent and detect potential issues during the life cycle of the claim. While Arkansas' improper payment rate is not impacted by work search issues due to the ability to issue a waiver, returning claimants to work as expeditiously as possible continues to be the primary objective of ADWS. To that end, the implementation of a random work search audit process for claimants will further ADWS' primary objectives and serve to ensure that claimants are complying with UI eligibility requirements. The random audit process will also provide an opportunity for UI staff to ensure that claimants understand their rights and responsibilities with regard to their UI claim.

Root Cause #1: Benefit Year Earnings

Strategies	Actions		Resources
1. Prevent UI Overpayments by continuing to educate claimants regarding timely and accurately reporting earnings and potential issues when filing continued claims.	Continued dissemination of "Your Unemployment Insurance Information Handbook" through direct and electronic contact.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Continued distribution of the "Fraud: It's A Crime" newsletter to claimants emphasizing how to properly report earnings and other potential issues during a claim series	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Require claimants who are in continued claim status and reported earnings for two consecutive weeks and stop reporting earnings to report to the local office for review of potential separation and/or other issues.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Integration of NASWA educational video regarding Benefit Year Earnings issues into the EZARC claims filing process.	First Quarter of 2020	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
2. Prevent, detect, and reduce UI overpayments by educating employers of the importance of providing timely and accurate wage information to ADWS.	Continued outreach to educate employers regarding state and federal unemployment laws through employer trade groups and periodic employer updates.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Continued distribution of employer newsletter regarding the unemployment insurance program	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Distribute 901A response instructions with the ADWS Online Employer Services portal.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical

Strategies	Actions		Resources
	Follow up with noncompliant new hire employers.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
3. Prevent, detect and reduce UI Overpayments by increasing employer usage of electronic wage information in BARTS.	Market 901A response options with the ADWS Online Employer Services portal.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Expanded marketing of ADWS Online Employer Services portal to employers.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Contributions, FIRE Unit and UI Technical
	Evaluate the effectiveness of the federal and state New Hire Registry in detecting potential earnings issues.	12/31/2019	UI Administration, Legal, FIRE, BAM, and UI Technical
<b>4. Prevent, detect and reduce Benefit Year Earnings issues by conducting random audits of partial claims.</b>	<b>Develop a random audit process for partial unemployment insurance claims to individuals to report to their assigned local office with wage verification for earnings during the second and seventh week in the claim series.</b>	<b>3/31/2020</b>	<b>UI Administration, Field Operations and UI Technical</b>
	Implement random wage audit process for partial unemployment insurance claims.	6/30/2020	UI Administration, Field Operations and UI Technical
	Explore whether available resources would best be served by focusing on partial unemployment claims of individuals who report 20% to 35% of their weekly benefit amount.	6/30/2020	UI Administration, Field Operations and UI Technical
5. Prevent, detect and reduce Benefit Year Earnings issues by continuing to partner with NASWA's Integrity Center to further ADWS' integrity efforts.	Explore utilizing customized BAM sub codes to further identify the causes of benefit year earnings issues.	12/31/2019	UI Administration, BAM, and UI Technical

Strategies	Actions		Resources
6. Prevent, detect and reduce Benefit Year Earnings issues by evaluating the impact the 2019 legislative changes had on the fraud rate.	Analyze the impact of the 2019 legislative changes had on reducing the fraud rate and consider any other changes that may be needed during the 2021 legislative session.	9/30/2020	UI Administration, Legal, UI Technical, BAM, and FIRE Unit

Quarter 1 Status Report (12/31/2019):

#### Root Cause #2: Separation Issues

Strategies	Actions		Resources
1. Reduction in the number of improper nonmonetary determinations through continued adjudicator training.	Continued education and monitoring of AAS staff to ensure consistent and accurate interpretation of Arkansas' unemployment laws.	Ongoing	UI Administration, AAS Program Manager, and AAS Satellite Office Supervisors
	Reduction of the number of wrong last work issues by confirming last employer when more than three weeks have passed between the separation date and the IC date.	Ongoing	UI Administration, AAS Program Manager, and AAS Satellite Office Supervisors
	Mandatory 100% case review for any adjudicator who receives a BAM finding for an improper separation nonmonetary determination.	Ongoing	UI Administration, AAS Program Manager, and AAS Satellite Office Supervisors
	Continued case review for adjudicators by AAS Satellite Office Supervisors.	Ongoing	UI Administration, AAS Program Manager, and AAS Satellite Office Supervisors
2. Reduction in the number of improper nonmonetary determinations by increasing the number of reasonable attempts to contact employers for information.	Exceed the minimum number of attempts (2) to contact an employer for separation information in cases that will likely result in a finding of eligibility.	Ongoing	UI Administration, AAS Program Manager, and AAS Satellite Office Supervisors
3. Reduction of improper payments through monitoring of appeal decisions.	Continued monitoring of appeal decisions to rapidly install stop payments in appeals filed by employers that result in a reversal of benefits.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Board of Review, Appeal Tribunal, UI Technical, and Field Operations

Strategies	Actions		Resources
	Continue to provide list of appeal reversals to Local Office Managers and Area Operations Chiefs to ensure local offices are properly installing stop payments and forwarding to BPC to establish overpayments.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Board of Review, Appeal Tribunal, UI Technical, and Field Operations
4. Prevent UI overpayments by continuing to educate employers of the importance of providing timely and sufficient information regarding separation issues.	Continued dissemination of "Unemployment Insurance Handbook for Arkansas Employers" through direct and electronic contact.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Contributions, UI Technical, and ADWS Website
	Continued distribution of employer newsletter regarding the unemployment insurance program.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
5. Detect concealed separation issues through continued utilization of the "Stopped Earnings" report.	Continued utilization of the "Stopped Earnings" report to detect potential unreported separation and other nonmonetary issues.	Ongoing	UI Administration, UI Technical, and Field Operations

Quarter 1 Status Report (12/31/2019)

Root Cause #3: All Other Causes

Strategies	Actions		Resources
1. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments resulting from appeal reversals.	Continued review of Appeal Tribunal cases to identify employer appeal reversals to ensure prompt implementation of appeal decision to reduce amount of overpayments.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Board of Review, Appeal Tribunal, UI Technical, and Field Operations
2. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments resulting from unreported nonmonetary issues.	Continued monitoring review of field operations daily reports to ensure proper application of law, policy and procedure.	Ongoing	UI Administration, UI Technical, and Field Operations
	Continued dissemination of claimant and employer newsletters covering potential nonmonetary issues that may arise in a claim series.	Ongoing	UI Administration, UI Technical, and Field Operations

Strategies	Actions		Resources
3. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments resulting from claim maintenance errors.	Continued review of randomly case files for each staff member to identify quality control and training issues.	Ongoing	UI Administration, UI Technical, and Field Operations
	Mandatory retraining and claim review for staff members who fail two or more quality reviews in a six month period.	Ongoing	UI Administration, UI Technical, and Field Operations
4. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments through more focused training for workforce partners and non-UI Field Operations staff.	Development of a mid-level training program of the UI program for workforce partners and non-UI Field Operations staff to better identify potential issues impacting an unemployment insurance claim.	3/31/2020	UI Administration, UI Technical, RESEA, and Field Operations
	Training sessions workforce partners and non-UI Field Operations staff to empower them to readily identify potential nonmonetary issues and to increase ability to properly advise claimants on UI requirements.	6/30/2020	UI Administration, UI Technical, RESEA, and Field Operations
4. Prevent, detect and reduce potential work search issues by conducting random audits of claims.	Develop a random work search audit process to require selected claimants to report to their assigned local office during the third and eight week in the claim series.	9/30/2020	UI Administration, Field Operations and UI Technical
	Implement random work search audit process.	12/31/2020	UI Administration, Field Operations and UI Technical
5. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments by working NASWA's Integrity Center to identify areas of opportunity for claimant messaging.	Continue to explore opportunities in the claims filing and continued claims processes to incorporate claimant messaging.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical

## 6. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The Unemployment Insurance Program Organization Chart can be found at:



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B. REQUIREMENTS FOR STATES ELECTING TO INCLUDE UI IN THE COMBINED STATE PLAN

1. SUBMIT AN SQSP IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER DEPENDING ON THEIR TIMING IN THE SQSP CYCLE:

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

All WIOA Core Programs

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

Additional Indicators of Performance
Arkansas has not established any additional indicators of performance.